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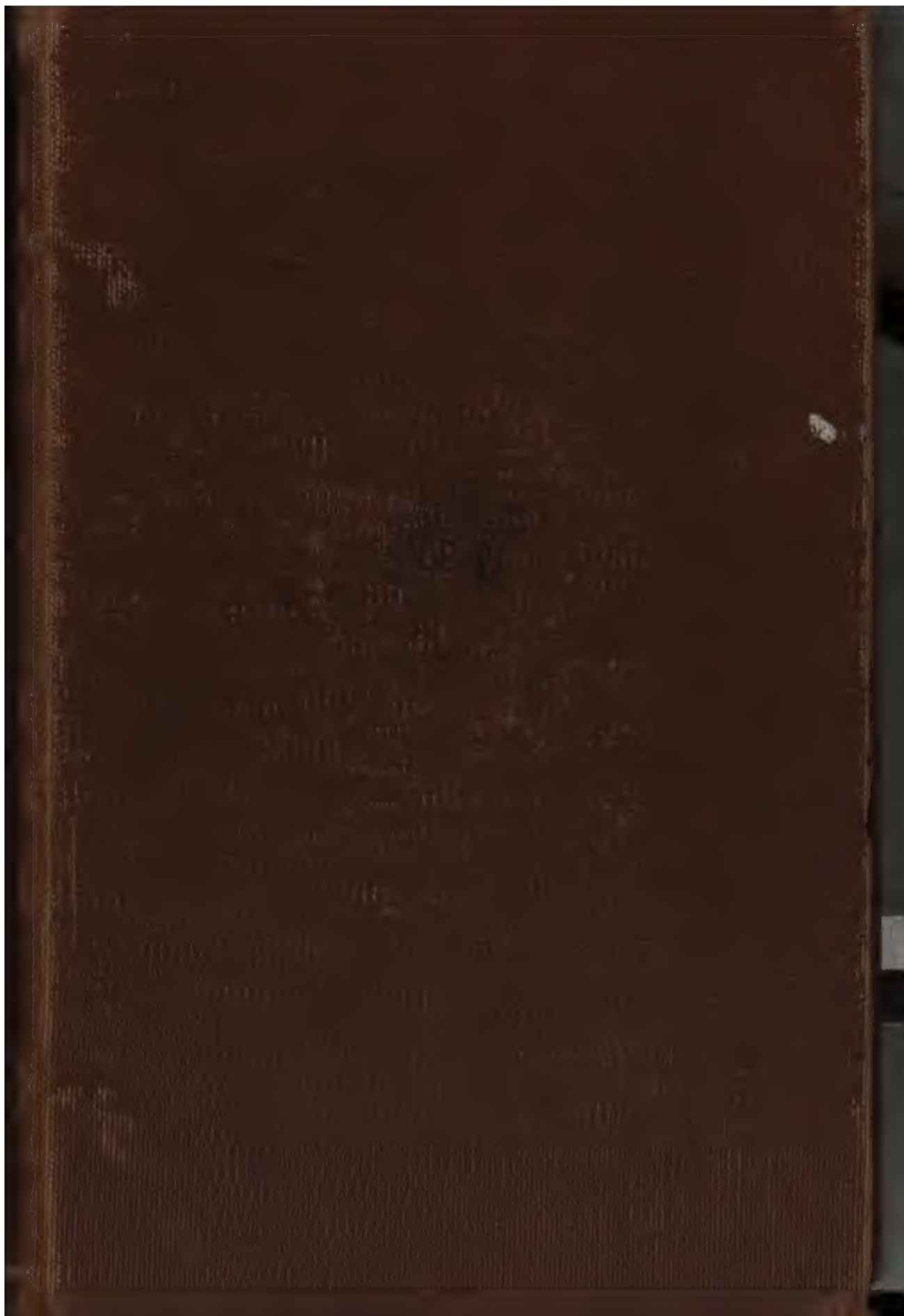
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A

TREATISE

ON THE

CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS

WHICH REST UPON

THE LEGISLATIVE POWER OF THE STATES
OF THE AMERICAN UNION.

BY

THOMAS M. COOLEY, LL.D.,

**ONE OF THE JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT OF MICHIGAN, AND JAY PROFESSOR
OF LAW IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN.**

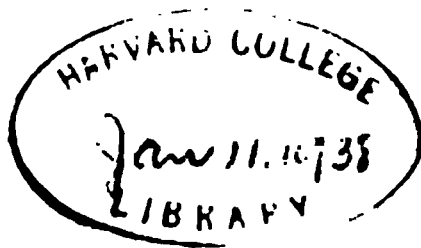
FOURTH EDITION,

WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS, GIVING THE RESULTS OF THE RECENT CASES.

BOSTON:
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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN the Preface to the first edition of this work, the author stated its purpose to be, to furnish to the practitioner and the student of the law such a presentation of elementary constitutional principles as should serve, with the aid of its references to judicial decisions, legal treatises, and historical events, as a convenient guide in the examination of questions respecting the constitutional limitations which rest upon the power of the several State legislatures. In the accomplishment of that purpose, the author further stated that he had faithfully endeavored to give the law as it had been settled by the authorities, rather than to present his own views. At the same time, he did not attempt to deny — what he supposed would be sufficiently apparent — that he had written in full sympathy (1). with all those restraints which the caution of the fathers had imposed upon the exercise of the powers of government, and with faith in the checks and balances of our republican system, and in correct conclusions by the general public sentiment, rather than in reliance upon a judicious, prudent, and just exercise of authority, when confided without restriction to any one man or body of men, whether sitting in legislative capacity or judicial. In this sympathy and faith, he had written of jury trials and the other safeguards to personal liberty, of liberty of the press and of vested rights; and he had also endeavored to point out that there (2) are on all sides definite limitations which circumscribe the legislative authority, independent of the specific restrictions which the people impose by their State constitutions. But while not predisposed to discover in any part of our system the rightful existence of any unlimited power, created by the Constitution, neither on the other hand had he designed to advance new doctrines, or to do more than state clearly and with reasonable conciseness the principles to be deduced from the judicial decisions.

The unexpected favor with which the work has been received having made a new edition necessary, the author has reviewed every part of it with care, but without finding occasion to change

in any important particular the conclusions before given. Further reflection has only tended to confirm him in his previous views of the need of constitutional restraints at every point where agents are to exercise the delegated authority of the people; and he is gratified to observe that in the judicial tribunals the tendency is not in the direction of a disregard of these restraints. The reader will find numerous additional references to new cases and other authorities; and some modifications have been made in the phraseology of the text, with a view to clearer and more accurate expression of his views. Trusting that these modifications and additions will be found not without value, he again submits his work "to the judgment of an enlightened and generous profession."

THOMAS M. COOLEY.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN,
ANN ARBOR, July, 1871.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

THE second edition being exhausted, the author, in preparing a third, has endeavored to give full references to such decisions as have recently been made or reported, having a bearing upon the points discussed. It will be seen on consulting the notes that the number of such decisions is large, and that some of them are of no little importance.

THOMAS M. COOLEY.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN,
ANN ARBOR, December, 1878.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

NEW topics in State Constitutional Law are not numerous; but such as are suggested by recent decisions have been discussed in this edition, and it is believed considerable value has been added to the work by further references to adjudged cases.

THOMAS M. COOLEY.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN,
ANN ARBOR, April, 1878.

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* CHAPTER II.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE government of the United States is the existing representative of the national government which has always in some form existed over the American States. Before the Revolution, the powers of government, which were exercised over all the colonies in common, were so exercised as pertaining either to the Crown of Great Britain or to the Parliament; but the extent of those powers, and how far vested in the Crown and how far in the Parliament, were questions never definitely settled, and which constituted subjects of dispute between the mother country and the people of the colonies, finally resulting in hostilities.¹ That the power over peace and war, the general direction of commercial intercourse with other nations, and the general control of such subjects as fall within the province of international law, were vested in the home government, and that the colonies were not, therefore, sovereign States in the full and proper sense of that term, were propositions never seriously disputed in America, and indeed were often formally conceded; and the disputes related to questions as to what were or were not matters of internal regulation, the control of which the colonists insisted should be left exclusively to themselves.

Besides the tie uniting the several colonies through the Crown of Great Britain, there had always been a strong tendency to a more intimate and voluntary union, whenever circumstances of danger threatened them; and this tendency led to the New England Confederacy of 1643, to the temporary Congress of 1690, to the plan of union agreed upon in Convention of 1754, but rejected by the Colonies as well as the Crown, to the Stamp Act Con-

¹ 1 Pitkin's Hist. U. S. c. 6; Life of 1765; Ramsay's Revolution in and Works of John Adams, Vol. I. South Carolina, pp. 6-11; 5 Bancroft's U. S. c. 18; 1 Webster's Works, 128; Von Holst, Const. Hist. c. 1; Story on Const. § 183 *et seq.*
pp. 122, 161; Vol. II. p. 311; Works of Jefferson, Vol. IX. p. 294; 2 Marshall's Washington, c. 2; Declaration of Rights by Colonial Congress

of Independence made them sovereign and independent States, by altogether abolishing the foreign jurisdiction, and substituting a national government of their own creation.

But while national powers were assumed by and con-
 [* 7] ceded to * the Congress of 1775–76, that body was nevertheless strictly revolutionary in its character, and, like all revolutionary bodies, its authority was undefined, and could be limited only, *first*, by instructions to individual delegates by the States choosing them; *second*, by the will of the Congress; and *third*, by the power to enforce that will.¹ As in the latter particular it was essentially feeble, the necessity for a clear specification of powers which should be exercised by the national government became speedily apparent, and led to the adoption of the Articles of Confederation. But those articles did not concede the full measure of power essential to the efficiency of a national government at home, the enforcement of respect abroad, or the preservation of the public faith or public credit; and the difficulties experienced induced the election of delegates to the Constitutional Convention held in 1787, by which a constitution was formed which was put into operation in 1789. As much larger powers were vested by this instrument in the general government than had ever been exercised in this country, by either the Crown, the Parliament, or the Revolutionary Congress, and larger than those conceded to the Congress under the Articles of Confederation, the assent of the people of the several States was essential to its acceptance, and a provision was inserted
 [* 8] in the Constitution that the ratification * of the conventions of nine States should be sufficient for the establishment of the Constitution between the States so ratifying the same. In fact, the Constitution was ratified by conventions of delegates chosen by the people in eleven of the States, before the new government was organized under it; and the remaining two,

capacity, established the present Constitution.” Per *Jay*, Ch. J., in *Chisholm v. Georgia*, 2 Dall. 470. See this point forcibly put and elaborated by Mr. A. J. Dallas, in his *Life and Writings*, by G. M. Dallas, 200–207. Also in *Texas v. White*, 7 Wall. 724. Professor Von Holst, in his *Constitutional History of the United States*,

c. 1, presents the same view clearly and fully.

¹ See remarks of *Iredell*, J., in *Penhallow v. Doane's Adm'r*, 8 Dall. 91, and of *Blair*, J., in the same case, p. 111. The true doctrine on this subject is very clearly explained by *Chase*, J., in *Ware v. Hylton*, 3 Dall. 231.

North Carolina and Rhode Island, by their refusal to accept, and by the action of the others in proceeding separately, were excluded altogether from that national jurisdiction which before had embraced them. This exclusion was not warranted by any thing contained in the Articles of Confederation, which purported to be articles of "perpetual union;" and the action of the eleven States in making radical revision of the Constitution, and excluding their associates for refusal to assent, was really revolutionary in character,¹ and only to be defended on the same ground of necessity on which all revolutionary action is justified, and which in this case was the absolute need, fully demonstrated by experience, of a more efficient general government.²

¹ Mr. Van Buren has said of it that it was "an heroic, though perhaps a lawless act." *Political Parties*, p. 50.

² "Two questions of a very delicate nature present themselves on this occasion: 1. On what principle the confederation, which stands in the form of a solemn compact among the States, can be superseded without the unanimous consent of the parties to it; 2. What relation is to subsist between the nine or more States, ratifying the Constitution, and the remaining few who do not become parties to it. The first question is answered at once by recurring to the absolute necessity of the case; to the great principle of self-preservation; to the transcendent law of nature and of nature's God, which declares that the safety and happiness of society are the objects at which all political institutions aim, and to which all such institutions must be sacrificed. *Perhaps*, also, an answer may be found without searching beyond the principles of the compact itself. It has been heretofore noted, among the defects of the confederation, that in many of the States it had received no higher sanction than a mere legislative ratification. The principle of reciprocity seems to require that its obligation on the

other States should be reduced to the same standard. A compact between independent sovereigns, founded on acts of legislative authority, can pretend to no higher validity than a league or treaty between the parties. It is an established doctrine on the subject of treaties, that all of the articles are mutually conditions of each other; that a breach of any one article is a breach of the whole treaty; and that a breach committed by either of the parties absolves the others, and authorizes them, if they please, to pronounce the compact violated and void. Should it unhappily be necessary to appeal to these delicate truths for a justification for dispensing with the consent of particular States to a dissolution of the federal pact, will not the complaining parties find it a difficult task to answer the multiplied and important infractions with which they may be confronted? The time has been when it was incumbent on us all to veil the ideas which this paragraph exhibits. The scene is now changed, and with it the part which the same motives dictate. The second question is not less delicate, and the flattering prospect of its being merely hypothetical forbids an over-curious discussion of it. It is one of those cases which must be left to provide for itself. In general it

[* 9] * Left at liberty now to assume complete powers of sovereignty as independent governments, these two States saw fit soon to resume their place in the American family, under a permission contained in the Constitution ; and new States have since been added from time to time, all of them, with a single exception, organized by the consent of the general government and embracing territory previously under its control. The exception was Texas, which had previously been an independent sovereign State, but which, by the conjoint action of its government and that of the United States, was received into the Union on an equal footing with the other States.

Without therefore discussing, or even designing to allude to any abstract theories as to the precise position and actual power of the several States at the time of forming the present Constitution,¹ it may be said of them generally that they have at all times been subject to some common national government, which has exercised control over the subjects of war and peace, and other matters pertaining to external sovereignty ; and that when the only three States which ever exercised complete sovereignty accepted the Constitution and came into the Union, on an equal footing with all the other States, they thereby accepted the same relative position to the general government, and divested themselves permanently of those national powers which the others had never exercised. And the assent once given to the Union was irrevocable. “ The Constitution in all its provisions looks to an indestructible Union composed of indestructible States.”²

The government of the United States is one of *enumerated powers* ; the national Constitution being the instrument which specifies them, and in which authority should be found for the exercise of any power which the national government assumes

may be observed, that although no political relation can subsist between the assenting and dissenting States, yet the moral relations will remain uncanceled. The claims of justice, both on one side and on the other, will be in force and must be fulfilled ; the rights of humanity must in all cases be duly and mutually respected ; whilst considerations of a common interest, and above all the remembrance of the endearing scenes which

are past, and the anticipation of a speedy triumph over the obstacles to reunion, will, it is hoped, not urge in vain *moderation* on one side, and *prudence* on the other.” *Federalist*, No. 43 (by *Madison*).

¹ See this subject discussed in *Gibbons v. Ogden*, 9 Wheat. 1.

² *Chase*, Ch. J., in *Texas v. White*, 7 Wall. 700, 725. See *United States v. Cathcart*, 1 Bond, 556.

to possess.¹ In this respect it differs from the constitutions of the *several States, which are not grants of [*10] powers to the States, but which apportion and impose restrictions upon the powers which the States inherently possess. The general purpose of the Constitution of the United States is declared by its founders to be, “to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.” To accomplish these purposes, the Congress is empowered by the eighth section of article one: —

1. To lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises; to pay the debts and provide for the common defence and general welfare of the United States. But all duties, imposts, and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.

2. To borrow money on the credit of the United States.

3. To regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several States, and with the Indian tribes.

4. To establish a uniform rule of naturalization, and uniform laws on the subject of bankruptcy, throughout the United States.

5. To coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin, and fix the standard of weights and measures.

6. To provide for the punishment of counterfeiting the securities and current coin of the United States.

7. To establish post-offices and post-roads.

8. To promote the progress of science and the useful arts, by

¹ “The government of the United States can claim no powers which are not granted to it by the Constitution; and the powers actually granted must be such as are expressly given, or given by necessary implication.” Per *Marshall*, Ch. J., in *Martin v. Hunter’s Lessee*, 1 Wheat. 326. “This instrument contains an enumeration of the powers expressly granted by the people to their government.” *Marshall*, Ch. J., in *Gibbons v. Ogden*, 9 Wheat. 187. See *Calder v. Bull*, 3 Dall. 386; *Briscoe v. Bank of Kentucky*, 11 Pet. 257; *Gilman v. Philadelphia*, 3 Wall. 713;

United States v. Cruikshanks, 92 U. S. Rep. 542, 550, 551, per *Waite*, Ch. J.; *Weister v. Hade*, 52 Penn. St. 477. The tenth amendment to the Constitution provides that “the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” No power is conferred by the Constitution upon Congress to establish mere police regulations within the States. *United States v. Dewitt*, 9 Wall. 41. See *Live Stock, &c. Association v. Crescent City, &c. Co.*, 16 Wall. 36.

The executive power is vested in a president, who is made commander-in-chief of the army and navy, and of the militia of the several States when called into the service of the United States; and who has power, by and with the consent of the Senate, to make treaties, provided two-thirds of the Senate concur, and, with the same advice and consent, to appoint ambassadors and other public ministers and consuls, judges of the Supreme Court, and other officers of the United States, whose appointments are not otherwise provided for.¹

The judicial power of the United States extends to all cases in law and equity arising under the national Constitution, the laws of the United States, and treaties made, or which shall be made, under their authority; to all cases affecting ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls; to all cases of admiralty and maritime jurisdiction; to controversies to which the United States shall be a party; to controversies between two or more States; between a State and citizens of another State; between citizens of different States; between citizens of the same State claiming lands under grants of different States; and between a [* 12] *State or citizens thereof and foreign States, citizens or subjects.² But a State is not subject to be sued in the courts of the United States by citizens of another State, or by citizens or subjects of any foreign State.³

The Constitution and the laws of the United States, made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties made under the authority of the United States, are declared to be the supreme law of the land; and the judges of every State are to be bound thereby, any thing in the constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding.⁴

214; *United States v. Cruikshanks*, 92 U. S. Rep. 542. See, further, *Kennard v. Louisiana*, 92 U. S. Rep. 480; *Railroad Co. v. Brown*, 17 Wall. 446.

¹ U. S. Const. art. 2.

² U. S. Const. art. 3, § 2.

³ U. S. Const. 11th Amendment.

⁴ U. S. Const. art. 6; *Owings v. Norwood's Lessee*, 5 Cranch, 348; *McCulloch v. Maryland*, 4 Wheat. 316; *Foster v. Neilson*, 2 Pet. 253, 314; *Cook v. Moffat*, 5 How. 295;

Dodge v. Woolsey, 18 How. 331.

When a treaty has been ratified by the proper formalities, it is, by the Constitution, the supreme law of the land, and the courts have no power to inquire into the authority of the persons by whom it was entered into on behalf of the foreign nation: *Doe v. Braden*, 16 How. 635, 657; or the powers or rights recognized by it the nation with which it was made: *Maiden v. Ingersoll*, 6 Mich. 373. State law in conflict with it must

the State court is in favor of the right, title, privilege, or exemption so claimed, the Judiciary Act does not authorize such removal.¹ Neither does it where the validity of the State law is drawn in question, and the decision of the State court is against its validity.²

But the same reasons which require that the final decision upon all questions of national jurisdiction should be left to the national courts will also hold the national courts bound to respect the decisions of the State courts upon all questions arising under the State constitutions and laws, where no question of national authority is involved, and to accept those decisions as correct, and to follow them whenever the same questions arise in the national courts.³ With the power to revise the decisions of the

368; *McKinny v. Carroll*, 12 Pet. 66; *Holmes v. Jennison*, 14 Pet. 540; *Scott v. Jones*, 5 How. 343; *Smith v. Hunter*, 7 How. 738; *Williams v. Oliver*, 12 How. 111; *Calcote v. Stanton*, 18 How. 243; *Maxwell v. Newbold*, 18 How. 511; *Hoyt v. Shelden*, 1 Black, 518; *Farney v. Towle*, 1 Black, 350; *Day v. Gallup*, 2 Wall. 97; *Walker v. Villavaso*, 6 Wall. 124; *The Victory*, 6 Wall. 382; *Hamilton Co. v. Mass.*, 6 Wall. 632; *Gibson v. Choteau*, 8 Wall. 314; *Worthy v. Commissioners*, 9 Wall. 611; *Messenger v. Mason*, 10 Wall. 507; *Insurance Co. v. Treasurer*, 11 Wall. 204; *McManus v. O'Sullivan*, 91 U. S. Rep. 578; *Bolling v. Lersner*, 91 U. S. Rep. 594. It is not sufficient that the presiding judge of the State court certifies that a right claimed under the national authority was brought in question. *Railroad Co. v. Rock*, 4 Wall. 177; *Parmelee v. Lawrence*, 11 Wall. 36.

¹ *Gordon v. Caldcleugh*, 3 Cranch, 268; *McDonough v. Millaudon*, 3 How. 693; *Fulton v. McAfee*, 16 Pet. 149; *Linton v. Stanton*, 12 How. 423; *Burke v. Gaines*, 19 How. 388; *Reddall v. Bryan*, 24 How. 420; *Roosevelt v. Meyer*, 1 Wall. 512; *Ryan v. Thomas*, 4 Wall. 603.

² *Commonwealth Bank v. Griffith*, 14 Pet. 56; *Walker v. Taylor*, 5 How.

64. We take no notice here of the statutes for the removal of causes from the State to the Federal courts for the purposes of original trial, as they are not important to any discussion we shall have occasion to enter upon in this work.

³ In *Beauregard v. New Orleans*, 18 How. 502, Mr. Justice *Campbell* says: "The constitution of this court requires it to follow the laws of the several States as rules of decision wherever they apply. And the habit of the court has been to defer to the decisions of their judicial tribunals upon questions arising out of the common law of the State, especially when applied to the title of lands." In *Bank of Hamilton v. Dudley's Lessee*, 2 Pet. 524, it was contended that the exclusive power of State courts to construe legislative acts did not extend to the paramount law, so as to enable them to give efficacy to an act which was contrary to the State constitution; but *Marshall*, Ch. J., said: "We cannot admit this distinction. The judicial department of every government is the rightful expositor of its laws, and emphatically of its supreme law." Again, in *Elmendorf v. Taylor*, 101 Wheat. 159, the same eminent judge says: "The judicial department of every government, where such depart-

judicial authority which would otherwise be inevitable, [* 15] and which, besides being unseemly, * would be dangerous to the peace, harmony, and stability of the Union.

Green v. Neal's Lessee, 6 Pet. 291, an important question was presented as to the proper course to be pursued by the Supreme Court of the United States, under somewhat embarrassing circumstances. That court had been called upon to put a construction upon a State statute of limitations, and had done so. Afterwards the same question had been before the Supreme Court of the State, and in repeated cases had been decided otherwise. The question now was whether the Supreme Court would follow its own decision, or reverse that, in order to put itself in harmony with the State decisions. The subject is considered at length by *McLean, J.*, who justly concludes that "adherence by the federal to the exposition of the local law, as given by the courts of the State, will greatly tend to preserve harmony in the exercise of the judicial power in the State and federal tribunals. This rule is not only recommended by strong considerations of propriety, growing out of our system of jurisprudence, but it is sustained by principle and authority." The court accordingly reversed its rulings to make them conform to those of the State court. See also *Suydam v. Williamson*, 24 How. 427; *Leffingwell v. Warren*, 2 Black, 599; *Blossburg, &c. R. R. Co. v. Tioga R. R. Co.*, 5 Blatch. 387; *Smith v. Shriver*, 3 Wall. Jr. 219. It is of course immaterial that the court may still be of opinion that the State court has erred, or that the decisions elsewhere are different. *Bell v. Morrison*, 1 Pet. 360. But where the Supreme Court had held that certain contracts for the price of slaves were not made void by the State constitution, and afterward the State court held otherwise, the Supreme Court, regarding this decision

wrong, declined to reverse their own ruling. *Rowan v. Runnels*, 5 How. 134. Compare this with *Nesmith v. Sheldon*, 7 How. 812, in which the court followed, without examination or question, the State decision, that a State general banking law was in violation of the constitution of the State. The United States Circuit Court had held otherwise previous to the State decision. *Falconer v. Campbell*, 2 McLean, 195.

This doctrine does not apply to questions not at all dependent upon local statutes or usages; as, for instance, to contracts and other instruments of a commercial and general nature, like bills of exchange: *Swift v. Tyson*, 16 Pet. 1; and insurance contracts: *Robinson v. Commonwealth Ins. Co.*, 3 Sum. 220. And see *Reimsdyke v. Kane*, 1 Gall. 376; *Austen v. Miller*, 5 McLean, 153; *Gloucester Ins. Co. v. Younger*, 2 Curt. C. C. 322; *Bragg v. Meyer*, McAll. 408. And of course cases presenting questions of conflict with the Constitution of the United States cannot be within it. *State Bank v. Knoup*, 16 How. 369; *Jefferson Branch Bank v. Skelley*, 1 Black, 436. And where a contract had been made under a settled construction of the State constitution by its highest court, the Supreme Court sustained it, notwithstanding the State court had since overruled its former decision. *Gelpecke v. Dubuque*, 1 Wall. 176. See *Olcott v. Supervisors*, 16 Wall. 678. Of late it has seemed that new and doubtful grounds were being taken for disregarding State decisions, and in several cases nearly one-half the members of the federal Supreme Court have deemed it necessary to protest against an abandonment of the sound and safe doctrine of the earlier decisions.

Besides conferring specified powers upon the national government, the Constitution contains also certain restrictions upon the action of the States, a portion of them designed to prevent encroachments upon the national authority, and another portion to protect individual rights against possible abuse of State power. Of the first class are the following: No State shall enter into any treaty, alliance, or confederation, grant letters of marque or reprisal, coin money, emit bills of credit,¹ or make any thing but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debts. No State shall, without the consent of Congress, lay any imposts or duties upon imports or exports, except what may be absolutely necessary for executing its inspection laws; and the net produce of all duties and imposts laid by any State on imports or exports shall be for the use of the treasury of the United States, and all such laws shall be subject to the revision and control of Congress. No State shall, without the consent of Congress, lay any duty of tonnage, keep troops or ships of war in time of peace, enter into any agreement or compact with another State or with a foreign power, or engage in war, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent danger as will not admit of delay. Of the second class are the following: No State shall pass any bill of attainder, *ex post facto* law, or law impairing the obligation of contracts,² or make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws,³ nor base discriminations in suffrage on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.⁴

¹ To constitute a bill of credit within the meaning of the Constitution, it must be issued by a State, involve the faith of the State, and be designed to circulate as money on the credit of the State in the ordinary uses of business. *Briscoe v. Bank of Kentucky*, 11 Pet. 257; *Woodruff v. Trapnall*, 10 How. 209. The facts that a State owns the entire capital stock of a bank, elects the directors, makes its bills receivable for the public dues, and pledges its faith for their redemption, do not make the bills of such bank "bills of credit" in the

constitutional sense. *Darrington v. State Bank of Alabama*, 13 How. 12. See, further, *Craig v. Missouri*, 4 Pet. 410; *Byrne v. Missouri*, 8 Pet. 40; *Curran v. Arkansas*, 15 How. 317; *Moreau v. Detchamendy*, 41 Mo. 431; *Bailey v. Milner*, 35 Geo. 330; *City National Bank v. Mahan*, 21 La. Ann. 751.

² Const. of U. S. art. 1, § 10; Story on Const. c. 33, 34.

³ Const. of U. S. 14th Amendment; Story on Const. (4th ed.) c. 47.

⁴ Const. of U. S. 15th Amendment; Story on Const. (4th ed.) c. 48.

Other provisions have for their object to prevent discriminations by the several States against the citizens and public authority and proceedings of other States. Of this class are the provisions that the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States;¹ that fugi-

¹ Const. of U. S. art. 4. "What are the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States? We feel no hesitation in confining these expressions to those privileges and immunities which are in their nature *fundamental*; which belong of right to the citizens of all free governments; and which have, at all times, been enjoyed by the citizens of the several States which compose this Union, from the time of their becoming free, independent, and sovereign. What those fundamental principles are, it would perhaps be more tedious than difficult to enumerate. They may, however, be all comprehended under the following general heads: protection by the government, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the right to acquire and possess property of every kind, and to pursue and obtain happiness and safety, subject nevertheless to such restraints as the government may justly prescribe for the general good of the whole. The right of a citizen of one State to pass through or to reside in any other State, for purposes of trade, agriculture, professional pursuits, or otherwise; to claim the benefit of the writ of *habeas corpus*; to institute and maintain actions of every kind in the courts of the State; to take, hold, and dispose of property, either real or personal; and an exemption from higher taxes or impositions than are paid by the citizens of the other State, — may be mentioned as some of the particular privileges and immunities of citizens, which are clearly embraced by the general description of privileges deemed to be fundamental; to which may be added the elective

franchise as regulated and established by the laws or constitution of the State in which it is to be exercised. These, and many others which might be mentioned, are, strictly speaking, privileges and immunities, and the enjoyment of them by the citizens of each State in every other State was manifestly calculated (to use the expressions of the preamble of the corresponding provision in the old Articles of Confederation) 'the better to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among the people of the different States of the Union.' " *Washington, J.*, in *Coryell v. Coryell*, 4 Wash. C. C. 380. The Supreme Court will not describe and define those privileges and immunities, in a general classification; preferring to decide each case as it may come up. *Conner v. Elliott*, 18 How. 591; *Ward v. Maryland*, 12 Wall. 418; *McCready v. Virginia*, 94 U. S. Rep. 391. The question in this last case was whether the State of Virginia could prohibit citizens of other States from planting oysters in Ware River, a stream in that State where the tide ebbs and flows, and the right be granted by the State to its own citizens exclusively. *Waite, Ch. J.*, in answering the question in the affirmative, said: "The right thus granted is not a privilege or immunity of general but of special citizenship. It does not belong of right to the citizens of all free governments, but only to the citizens of Virginia, on account of the peculiar circumstances in which they are placed; they, and they alone, owned the property to be sold or used, and they alone had the power to dispose of it as they saw fit.

tives from justice shall * be delivered up,¹ and that full [* 16]

They owned it, not by virtue of citizenship merely, but of citizenship and domicile united; that is to say, by virtue of a citizenship confined to that particular locality." See also *Paul v. Hazelton*, 37 N. J. 106. For other discussions upon this subject, see *Murray v. McCarty*, 2 Munf. 393; *Lemmon v. People*, 26 Barb. 270, and 20 N. Y. 562; *Campbell v. Morris*, 3 Har. & M'H. 554; *Amy v. Smith*, 1 Lit. 326; *Crandall v. State*, 10 Conn. 340; *Butler v. Farnsworth*, 4 Wash. C. C. 101; *Commonwealth v. Towles*, 5 Leigh, 743; *Haney v. Marshall*, 9 Md. 194; *Slaughter v. Commonwealth*, 13 Grat. 767; *State v. Medbury*, 3 R. I. 138; *People v. Im-lay*, 20 Barb. 68; *People v. Coleman*, 4 Cal. 46; *People v. Thurber*, 13 Ill. 544; *Phoenix Insurance Co. v. Commonwealth*, 5 Bush, 68; *Ducat v. Chicago*, 48 Ill. 172; *Fire Department v. Noble*, 3 E. D. Smith, 441; *Same v. Wright*, 3 E. D. Smith, 453; *Same v. Holfenstein*, 16 Wis. 186; *Sears v. Commissioners of Warren Co.*, 36 Ind. 267; *Jeffersonville, &c. R. R. Co. v. Hendricks*, 41 Ind. 71; *Cincinnati Health Association v. Rosenthal*, 55 Ill. 85; *State v. Fosdick*, 21 La. Ann. 434; *Live Stock, &c. Association v. Crescent City, &c. Co.*, 16 Wall. 36; *Bradwell v. State*, 16 Wall. 130; *Barb-meyer v. Iowa*, 18 Wall. 129; *United States v. Cruikshanks*, 92 U. S. Rep. 542. The constitutional provision does not apply to corporations. *Warren Manuf. Co. v. Ætna Ins. Co.*, 2 Paine, 501; *Paul v. Virginia*, 8 Wall. 168. A discrimination between local freight on railroads and that which is extra-territorial is not personal, and therefore not forbidden by this clause of the Constitution.. *Shipper v. Pennsylvania R. R. Co.*, 47 Penn. St. 338. A State cannot impose, for the

privilege of doing business within its limits, a heavier license tax upon non-residents than is required of residents. *Ward v. Maryland*, 12 Wall. 418.

¹ *Extradition as between the States.* The return by one State of fugitives from justice which have fled to it from another State is only made a matter of rightful demand by the provisions of the federal Constitution. In the absence of such provisions, it might be provided for by State law; but the Constitution makes that obligatory which otherwise would rest in the imperfect and uncertain requirements of inter-state comity. The subject has received much attention from the courts when having occasion to consider the nature and extent of the constitutional obligation. It has also been the subject of many executive papers; and several controversions between the executives of New York and those of more southern States are referred to in the recent life of William H. Seward, by his son. The following are among the judicial decisions: The offence for which extradition may be ordered need not have been an offence either at the common law or at the time the Constitution was adopted; it is sufficient that it was so at the time the act was committed, and when demand is made. *Matter of Clark*, 9 Wend. 221; *Johnston v. Riley*, 13 Geo. 97; *Matter of Fetter*, 23 N. J. 311; *Matter of Voorhies*, 32 N. J. 141; *Morton v. Skinner*, 48 Ind. 123; *Matter of Hughes*, Phill. (N. C.) 57; *Kentucky v. Dennison*, 24 How. 66. The offence must have been actually committed within the State making the demand, and the accused must have fled therefrom. *Ex parte Smith*, 3 McLean, 133. The accused may be arrested to await

[* 17] faith and credit shall be given in * each State to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other State.¹ Many cases have been decided under these several

demand: *State v. Buzine*, 4 Harr. 572; *Ex parte Culreth*, 49 Cal. 436; but he cannot be surrendered before formal demand is made, and parties who seize and deliver him up without demand will be liable for doing so: *Botts v. Williams*, 17 B. Monr. 677. Still, if he is returned to the State from whence he fled without proper papers, this will be no sufficient ground for his discharge from custody. *Dow's Case*, 18 Penn. St. 39. The demand is to be made by the executive of the State, by which is meant the governor: *Commonwealth v. Hall*, 9 Gray, 262; and it is the duty of the executive of the State to which the offender has fled to comply: *Johnston v. Riley*, 13 Geo. 97; but if he refuses to do so, the courts have no power to compel him: *Kentucky v. Dennison*, 24 How. 66; *Matter of Manchester*, 5 Cal. 237. There must be a showing of sufficient cause for the arrest before the requisition can issue; but, after it is issued and complied with, it is competent for the courts of either State on *habeas corpus* to look into the papers, and, if they show no sufficient legal cause, to order the prisoner's discharge. *Ex parte Smith*, 3 McLean, 121; *Matter of Clark*, 9 Wend. 219; *Matter of Manchester*, 5 Cal. 237; *Matter of Heyward*, 1 Sandf. 701; *Ex parte White*, 49 Cal. 434; *State v. Hufford*, 28 Iowa, 391; *People v. Brady*, 56 N. Y. 182; *Kingsbury's Case*, 106 Mass. 223. The federal courts have no power to compel the State authorities to fulfil their duties under this clause of the Constitution. *Kentucky v. Dennison*, 24 How. 66.

Extradition to foreign countries is purely a national power, to be exercised under treaties. *Holmes v. Jen-*

nison, 14 Pet. 540; *Ex parte Holmes*, 12 Vt. 631; *People v. Curtis*, 50 N. Y. 321.

¹ Const. of U. S. art. 4. This clause of the Constitution has been the subject of a good deal of discussion in the courts. It is well settled that if the record of a judgment shows that it was rendered without service of process or appearance of the defendant, or if that fact can be shown without contradicting the recitals of the record, it will be treated as void in any other State, notwithstanding this constitutional provision. *Kibbe v. Kibbe*, Kirby, 126; *Aldrich v. Kinney*, 4 Conn. 380; *Middlebrooks v. Ins. Co.*, 14 Conn. 307; *Wood v. Watkinson*, 17 Conn. 500; *Bartlett v. Knight*, 1 Mass. 409; *Bissell v. Briggs*, 9 Mass. 462; *Hall v. Williams*, 6 Pick. 232; *Woodworth v. Tremere*, 6 Pick. 354; *Gleason v. Dodd*, 4 Met. 333; *Commonwealth v. Blood*, 97 Mass. 538; *Edson v. Edson*, 108 Mass. 590; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 393; *Kilbourne v. Woodworth*, 5 Johns. 37; *Robinson v. Ward's Executors*, 8 Johns. 86; *Fenton v. Garglick*, 8 Johns. 194; *Pawling v. Bird's Executors*, 13 Johns. 192; *Holbrook v. Murray*, 5 Wend. 161; *Bradshaw v. Heath*, 13 Wend. 407; *Noyes v. Butler*, 6 Barb. 613; *Hoffman v. Hoffman*, 46 N. Y. 30; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 299; *Thurber v. Blackbourne*, 1 N. H. 242; *Whittier v. Wendell*, 7 N. H. 257; *Rangely v. Webster*, 11 N. H. 306; *Adams v. Adams*, 51 N. H. 388; s. c. 12 Am. Rep. 134; *Wilson v. Jackson*, 10 Mo. 334. See *McLaurine v. Monroe*, 30 Mo. 462; *Bimeler v. Dawson*, 4 Scam. 536; *Warren v. McCarthy*, 25 Ill. 95; *Curtiss v. Gibbs*, 1 Penn. 406; *Rogers v. Coleman*, Hard. 416; *Armstrong v. Harshaw*, 3 Dev.

[* 18] * republican members against aristocratic and monarchical innovations.¹

So far as a particular consideration of the foregoing provisions falls within the plan of our present work, it will be more convenient to treat of them in another place, especially as all of them which have for their object the protection of person or property are usually repeated in the bills of rights contained in the State constitutions, and will require some notice at our hands as a part of State constitutional law.

Where powers are conferred upon the general government, the exercise of the same powers by the States is impliedly prohibited, wherever the intent of the grant to the national government would be defeated by such exercise. On this ground it is held that the States cannot tax the agencies or loans of the general government; since the power to tax, if possessed by the States in regard to these objects, might be so exercised as altogether to destroy such agencies and impair or even destroy the national credit.² And where by the national Constitution jurisdiction is given to the national courts with a view to the more efficient and harmonious working of the system organized under it, it is competent for Congress in its wisdom to make that jurisdiction exclusive of the State courts.³ On some other subjects State laws may be valid until the power of Congress is exercised, when they become superseded, either wholly, or so far as they are found inconsistent. The States may legislate on the subject of bankruptcy if there be no national bankrupt law.⁴ State laws for organizing and disciplining the militia are valid, except as they

¹ Federalist, Nos. 43 and 44. It does not fall within our province to discuss these provisions. They have been much discussed in Congress within a few years, but in a party, rather than a judicial, spirit. See Story on Const. (4th ed.) c. 41, and notes, and article in International Review for January, 1875, on "The Guaranty of Order and Republican Government in the States."

² *McCulloch v. Maryland*, 4 Wheat. 316. 427; *Weston v. Charleston*, 2 Pet. 449. See cases collected, *post*,

p. *482. State laws cannot regulate the sale of patents, the whole subject belonging exclusively to Congress. *Ex parte Robinson*, 2 Biss. 309.

³ *Martin v. Hunter's Lessee*, 1 Wheat. 334; *The Moses Taylor v. Hammons*, 4 Wall. 411; *The Ad Hine v. Trevor*, 4 Wall. 555. And see note to these cases in the *Western Jurist*, Vol. I. p. 241.

⁴ *Sturgis v. Crowninshield*, 4 Wheat. 122; *McMillan v. McNeill*, 4 Wheat. 209. And see *post*, pp. *293-294.

tion we shall have little occasion to deal. They have been the subject of elaborate treatises, judicial opinions, and legislative debates, which are familiar alike to the legal profession and to the public at large. So far as that instrument apportions powers to the national judiciary, it must be understood, for the most part, as simply authorizing Congress to pass the necessary legislation for the exercise of those powers by the federal courts, and not as directly, of its own force, vesting them with that authority. The Constitution does not, of its own force, give to national courts jurisdiction of the several cases which it enumerates, but an act of Congress is essential, first, to create courts, and afterwards to apportion the jurisdiction among them. The exceptions are of those few cases of which the Constitution confers jurisdiction upon the Supreme Court by name. And although the courts of the United States administer the common law in many cases, they do not derive authority from the common law to take cognizance of and punish offences against the government. Offences against the nation are defined and their punishment prescribed by acts of Congress.¹

¹ Demurrer to an indictment for a libel upon the President and Congress. By the court: "The only question which this case presents is, whether the circuit courts can exercise a common-law jurisdiction in criminal cases. . . . The general acquiescence of legal men shows the prevalence of opinion in favor of the negative of the proposition. The course of reasoning which leads to this conclusion is simple, obvious, and admits of but little illustration. The powers of the general government are made up of concessions from the several States: whatever is not expressly given to the former, the latter expressly reserve. The judicial power of the United States is a constitutional part of these concessions: that power is to be exercised by courts organized for the purpose, and brought into existence by an effort of the legislative power of the Union. Of all the courts which the United States may,

under their general powers, constitute, one only, the Supreme Court, possesses jurisdiction derived immediately from the Constitution, and of which the legislative power cannot deprive it. All other courts created by the general government possess no jurisdiction but what is given them by the power that created them, and can be vested with none but what the power ceded to the general government will authorize them to confer. It is not necessary to inquire whether the general government, in any and what extent, possesses the power of conferring on its courts a jurisdiction in cases similar to the present; it is enough that such jurisdiction has not been conferred by any legislative act, if it does not result to those courts as a consequence of their creation." *United States v. Hudson*, 7 Cranch, 32. See *United States v. Coolidge*, 1 Wheat. 415. "It is clear there can be no common law of the United

States. The federal government is composed of twenty-four sovereign and independent States, each of which may have its local usages, customs, and common law. There is no principle which pervades the Union, and has the authority of law, that is not embodied in the Constitution or laws of the Union. The common law could be made a part of our federal system only by legislative adoption." Per *McLean*, J., *Wheaton v. Peters*, 8

Pet. 658. See also *Kendall v. United States*, 12 Pet. 524; *Lorman v. Clarke*, 2 McLean, 568; *United States v. Lancaster*, 2 McLean, 433; *United States v. New Bedford Bridge*, 1 Wood. & M. 435; *United States v. Wilson*, 3 Blatch. 435; *United States v. Barney*, 5 Blatch. 294. As to the adoption of the common law by the States, see *Van Ness v. Pacard*, 2 Pet. 144, per Story, J.; and *post*, p. * 23, and cases cited in notes.

[* 21]

* CHAPTER III.

THE FORMATION AND AMENDMENT OF STATE CONSTITUTIONS.

THE Constitution of the United States assumes the existence of thirteen distinct State governments, over whose people its authority was to be extended if ratified by conventions chosen for the purpose. Each of these States was then exercising the powers of government under some form of written constitution, and that instrument would remain unaffected by the adoption of the national Constitution, except in those particulars in which the two would come in conflict; and as to those, the latter would modify and control the former.¹ But besides this fundamental law, every State had also a body of laws, prescribing the rights, duties, and obligations of persons within its jurisdiction, and establishing those minute rules for the various relations of life which cannot be properly incorporated in a constitution, but must be left to the regulation of the ordinary law-making power.

By far the larger and more valuable portion of that body of laws consisted of the *common law of England*, which had been transplanted in the American wilderness, and which the colonists, now become an independent nation, had found a shelter of protection during all the long contest with the mother country, brought at last to so fortunate a conclusion.

The common law of England consisted of those maxims of freedom, order, enterprise, and thrift which had prevailed in the conduct of public affairs, the management of private business, the regulation of the domestic institutions, and the acquisition, control, and transfer of property from time immemorial. It was the outgrowth of the habits of thought and action of the people, and

¹ *Livingston v. Van Ingen*, 9 &c. of *Mobile v. Dargan*, 45 Ala. Johns. 507; *State v. Cape Girardeau*, 310. &c. *R. R. Co.*, 48 Mo. 468; *Mayor*,

was modified gradually and insensibly from time to time as those habits became modified, and as civilization advanced, and new inventions introduced new wants and conveniences, and new modes of business. Springing from the very nature of the people themselves, and developed in their own experience, it was obviously the body of laws best adapted to their needs, and as they took with them their nature, so also they would take with them these laws whenever they should transfer their domicile from one country to another.

* To eulogize the common law is no part of our present purpose. [* 22] Many of its features were exceedingly harsh and repulsive, and gave unmistakable proofs that they had their origin in times of profound ignorance, superstition, and barbarism. The feudal system, which was essentially a system of violence, disorder, and rapine,¹ gave birth to many of the maxims of the common law; and some of these, long after that system has passed away, may still be traced in our law, especially in the rules which govern the acquisition, control, and enjoyment of real estate. The criminal code was also marked by cruel and absurd features, some of which have clung to it with wonderful tenacity, even after the most stupid could perceive their inconsistency with justice and civilization. But, on the whole, the system was the best foundation on which to erect an enduring structure of civil liberty which the world has ever known. It was the peculiar excellence of the common law of England that it recognized the worth, and sought especially to protect the rights and privileges, of the individual man. Its maxims were those of a sturdy and independent race, accustomed in an unusual degree to freedom of thought and action, and to a share in the administration of public affairs; and arbitrary power and uncontrolled authority were not recognized in its principles. Awe surrounded and majesty clothed the king, but the humblest subject might shut the door of his cottage against him, and defend from intrusion that privacy which was as sacred as the kingly prerogatives.² The system was the opposite of servile;

¹ "A feudal kingdom was a confederacy of a numerous body, who lived in a state of war against each other, and of rapine towards all mankind, in which the king, according to his ability and vigor, was either a

cipher or a tyrant, and a great portion of the people were reduced to personal slavery." Mackintosh, History of England, c. 3.

² See *post*, p. *299.

its features implied boldness, and independent self-reliance on the part of the people ; and if the criminal code was harsh, it at least escaped the inquisitorial features which were apparent in criminal procedure of other civilized countries, and which have ever been fruitful of injustice, oppression, and terror.

For several hundred years, however, changes had from time to time been made in the common law by means of statutes. Originally the purpose of general statutes was mainly to declare and reaffirm such common-law principles as, by reason of usurpations and abuses, had come to be of doubtful force, and which, [* 23] therefore, * needed to be authoritatively announced, that king and subject alike might understand and observe them. Such was the purpose of the first great statute, promulgated at a time when the legislative power was exercised by the king alone, and which is still known as the Magna Charta of King John.¹ Such also was the purpose of the several confirmations of that charter, as well as of the Petition of Right,² and the Bill of Rights,³ each of which became necessary by reason of usurpations. But further statutes also became needful because old customs and modes of business were unsuited to new conditions of things when property had become more valuable, wealth greater, commerce more extended, and when all these changes had brought with them new desires and necessities, and also new dangers against which society as well as the individual subject needed protection. For this reason the Statute of Wills⁴ and the Statute of Frauds and Perjuries⁵ became important; and the Habeas Corpus Act⁶ was also found necessary, not so much to change the law,⁷ as to

¹ It is justly observed by Sidney that "Magna Charta was not made to restrain the absolute authority, for no such thing was in being or pretended (the folly of such visions seeming to have been reserved to complete the misfortunes and ignominy of our age), but it was to assert the native and original liberties of our nation by the confession of the king then being; that neither he nor his successors should any way encroach upon them." Sidney on Government, c. 3, sec. 27.

² 1 Charles I. c. 1.

³ 1 William & Mary, sess. 2, c. 2.

⁴ 32 Henry VIII. c. 7, and 34 & 35 Henry VIII. c. 5.

⁵ 29 Charles II. c. 3.

⁶ 31 Charles II. c. 2.

⁷ "I dare not advise to cast the laws into a new mould. The work which I propound tendeth to the pruning and grafting of the law, and not the plowing up and planting it again, for such a remove I should hold for a perilous innovation." Bacon's Works, Vol. II. p. 231, Phil. ed. 1852.

secure existing principles of the common law against being habitually set aside and violated by those in power.

From the first the colonists in America claimed the benefit and protection of the common law. In some particulars, however, the common law as then existing in England was not suited to their condition and circumstances in the new country, and those particulars they omitted as it was put in practice by them.¹

¹ "The common law of England is not to be taken, in all respects, to be that of America. Our ancestors brought with them its general principles, and claimed it as their birth-right; but they brought with them and adopted only that portion which was applicable to their condition." *Story, J., in Van Ness v. Pacard*, 2 Pet. 144. "The settlers of colonies in America did not carry with them the laws of the land as being bound by them wherever they should settle. They left the realm to avoid the inconveniences and hardships they were under, where some of these laws were in force; particularly ecclesiastical laws, those for payment of tithes, and others. Had it been understood that they were to carry these laws with them, they had better have stayed at home among their friends, unexposed to the risks and toils of a new settlement. They carried with them a right to such parts of laws of the land as they should judge advantageous or useful to them; a right to be free from those they thought hurtful, and a right to make such others as they should think necessary, not infringing the general rights of Englishmen; and such new laws they were to form as agreeable as might be to the laws of England." *Franklin, Works by Sparks*, Vol. IV. p. 271. See also *Chisholm v. Georgia*, 2 Dall. 435; *Patterson v. Winn*, 5 Pet. 241; *Wheaton v. Peters*, 8 Pet. 659; *Pollard v. Hagan*, 3 How. 212; *Commonwealth v. Leach*, 1 Mass. 59; *Commonwealth v. Knowlton*, 2 Mass. 534; *Commonwealth v. Hunt*, 4 Met. 122; *Pearce v. Atwood*, 13 Mass. 354; *Sackett v. Sackett*, 8 Pick. 309; *Marks v. Morris*, 4 Hen & M. 463; *Mayo v. Wilson*, 1 N. H. 58; *Houghton v. Page*, 2 N. H. 44; *State v. Rollins*, 8 N. H. 550; *State v. Buchanan*, 5 H. & J. 356; *Sibley v. Williams*, 3 G. & J. 62; *State v. Cummings*, 33 Conn. 260; *Martin v. Bigelow*, 2 Aiken, 187; *Lindsley v. Coats*, 1 Ohio, 245; *Bloom v. Richards*, 2 Ohio, n. s. 390; *Lyle v. Richards*, 9 S. & R. 330; *State v. Campbell*, T. U. P. Charl. 167; *Craft v. State Bank*, 7 Ind. 219; *Dawson v. Coffman*, 28 Ind. 220; *Bogardus v. Trinity Church*, 4 Sandf. Ch. 757; *Morgau v. King*, 30 Barb. 9; *Lansing v. Stone*, 37 Barb. 15; *Simpson v. State*, 5 Yerg. 356; *Crouch v. Hall*, 15 Ill. 263; *Brown v. Pratt*, 3 Jones (N. C.) Eq. 202; *Stout v. Keyes*, 2 Doug. (Mich.) 184; *Lorman v. Benson*, 8 Mich. 18; *Pier-son v. State*, 12 Cal. 149; *Norris v. Harris*, 15 Cal. 226; *Powell v. Sims*, 5 W. Va. 1; *Colley v. Merrill*, 6 Me. 55; *State v. Cawood*, 2 Stew. 362; *Carter v. Balfour*, 19 Ala. 814; *Barlow v. Lambert*, 28 Ala. 704; *Goodwin v. Thompson*, 2 Greene (Iowa), 329; *Wagner v. Bissell*, 3 Iowa, 396; *Noonan v. State*, 9 Miss. 562; *Powell v. Brandon*, 24 Miss. 343; *Coburn v. Harvey*, 18 Wis. 147; *Reaume v. Chambers*, 22 Mo. 36; *Hamilton v. Kneeland*, 1 Nev. 40. The courts of one State will presume the common law of a sister State to be the same as their own, in the absence of evidence to the contrary. *Abell v. Douglass*,

[* 24] They also claimed the benefit of * such statutes as from time to time had been enacted in modification of this body of rules.¹ And when the difficulties with the home government sprung up, it was a source of immense moral power to the colonists that they were able to show that the rights they claimed were conferred by the common law, and that the king and Parliament were seeking to deprive them of the common birthright of Englishmen. Did Parliament attempt to levy taxes in America, the people demanded the benefit of that maxim with which for many generations every intelligent subject had been familiar, that those must vote the tax who are to pay it.² Did Parliament order offenders against the laws in America to be sent to England for trial, every American was roused to indignation, and protested against the trampling under foot of that time-honored principle, that trials for crime must be by a jury of the vicinage. Contending thus behind the bulwarks of the common law, Englishmen would appreciate and sympathize with their position, and Americans would feel doubly strong in a cause that was right not only, but the justice of which must be confirmed by an appeal to the consciousness of their enemies themselves.

The evidence of the common law consisted in part of the declaratory statutes we have mentioned,³ in part of the commentaries

4 Denio, 305; *Kermott v. Ayer*, 11 Mich. 181; *Schurman v. Marley*, 29 Ind. 458.

¹ The acts of Parliament passed after the settlement of a colony were not in force therein, unless made so by express words, or by adoption. *Commonwealth v. Lodge*, 2 Grat. 579; *Pemble v. Clifford*, 2 McCord, 31. See *Swift v. Tousey*, 5 Ind. 196; *Baker v. Mattocks*, Quincy, 72; *Cathcart v. Robinson*, 5 Pet. 280. Those amendatory of the common law, if suited to the condition of things in America, were generally adopted by tacit consent. For the differing views taken by English and American statesmen upon the general questions here discussed, see the observations by Governor Pownall, and the comments of Franklin thereon, 4 Works of Franklin, by Sparks, 271.

² "The blessing of Judah and

Issachar will never meet; that the same people or nation should be both the lion's whelp and the ass between burdens; neither will it be that a people overlaid with taxes should ever become valiant and martial. It is true that taxes levied by consent of the State do abate men's courage less, as it hath been seen notably in the exercise of the Low Countries, and in some degree in the subsidies of England, for you must note that we speak now of the heart and not of the purse; so that although the same tribute or tax laid by consent or by imposing be all one to the purse, yet it works diversely upon the courage. So that you may conclude that no people overcharged with tribute is fit for empire." Lord Bacon on the True Greatness of Kingdoms.

³ These statutes upon the points which are covered by them are the

of such men learned in the law as had been accepted as authority, but mainly in the decisions of the courts applying the * law to actual controversies. While colonization con- [* 25] tinued, — that is to say, until the war of the Revolution actually commenced, — these decisions were authority in the colonies, and the changes made in the common law up to the same period were operative in America also if suited to the condition of things here. The opening of the war of the Revolution is the point of time at which the continuous stream of the common law became divided, and that portion which had been adopted in America flowed on by itself, no longer subject to changes from across the ocean, but liable still to be gradually modified through changes in the modes of thought and of business among the people, as well as through statutory enactments.

The colonies also had legislatures of their own, by which laws had been passed which were in force at the time of the separation, and which remained unaffected thereby. When, therefore, they emerged from the colonial condition into that of independence, the laws which governed them consisted, *first*, of the common law of England, so far as they had tacitly adopted it as suited to their condition; *second*, of the statutes of England, or of Great Britain, amendatory of the common law, which they had in like manner adopted; and, *third*, of the colonial statutes.¹ The first and second constituted the American common law, and by this in

best evidence possible. They are the living charters of English liberty, to the present day; and as the forerunners of the American constitutions and the source from which have been derived many of the most important articles in their bills of rights, they are constantly appealed to when personal liberty or private rights are placed in apparent antagonism to the claims of government.

¹ The like condition of things is found to exist in the new States formed and admitted to the Union since the Constitution was adopted. Congress creates territorial governments of different grades, but generally with plenary legislative power either in the governor and judges, a territorial council, or a territorial leg-

islature chosen by the people; and the authority of this body extends to all rightful subjects of legislation, subject, however, to the disapproval of Congress. *Vincennes University v. Indiana*, 14 How. 273; *Miners' Bank v. Iowa*, 12 How. 1. The legislation, of course, must not be in conflict with the law of Congress conferring the power to legislate, but a variance from it may be supposed approved by that body, if suffered to remain without disapproval for a series of years after being duly reported to it. *Clinton v. Englebrecht*, 13 Wall. 434, 446. See *Williams v. Bank of Michigan*, 7 Wend. 539; *Swan v. Williams*, 2 Mich. 427; *Stout v. Hyatt*, 13 Kan. 232.

great part are rights adjudged and wrongs redressed in the American States to this day.¹

¹ A few of the States, to get rid of confusion in the law, deemed it desirable to repeal the acts of Parliament, and to re-enact such portions of them as were regarded important here. See the Michigan repealing statute, copied from that of Virginia, in Code of 1820, p. 459. Others named a date or event, and provided by law that English statutes passed subsequently should not be of force within their limits. In some of the new States there were also other laws in force than those to which we have above alluded. Although it has been said in *La Plaisance Bay Harbor Co. v. The City of Monroe*, Walk. Ch. 155, and *Depew v. Trustees of Wabash & Erie Canal*, 5 Ind. 8, that the ordinance of 1787 was superseded in each of the States formed out of the North-West Territory by the adoption of a State constitution, and admission to the Union, yet the weight of judicial authority is probably the other way. In *Hogg v. The Zanesville Canal Manufacturing Co.*, 5 Ohio, 410, it was held that the provision of the ordinance that the navigable waters of the Territory and the carrying-places between should be common highways, and for ever free, was permanent in its obligation, and could not be altered without the consent both of the people of the State and of the United States, given through their representatives. "It is an article of compact; and until we assume the principle that the sovereign power of a State is not bound by compact, this clause must be considered obligatory." Justice *McLean* and Judge *Leavitt*, in *Spooner v. McConnell*, 1 McLean, 337, examine this subject at considerable length, and both arrive at the same conclusion with the Ohio court. The view taken of the ordinance in that case was, that such parts of it as were

designed temporarily to regulate the government of the Territory were abolished by the change from a territorial to a State government, while the other parts, which were designed to be permanent, are unalterable except by common consent. Some of these, however, being guaranteed by the federal Constitution, afterwards adopted, may be regarded as practically annulled, while any others which are opposed to the constitution of any State formed out of the Territory must also be considered as annulled by common consent; the people of the State assenting in forming their constitution, and Congress in admitting the State into the Union under it. The article in regard to navigable waters is therefore still in force. The same was also said in regard to the article prohibiting slavery, though that also may now be regarded as practically annulled by the amendment to the federal Constitution covering the same ground. The like opinion was subsequently expressed in *Palmer v. Commissioners of Cuyahoga Co.*, 8 McLean, 226, and in *Jolly v. Terre Haute Drawbridge Co.*, 6 McLean, 237. See also *Strader v. Graham*, 10 How. 82; *Doe v. Douglass*, 8 Blackf. 12; *Connecticut Mutual Life Ins. Co. v. Cross*, 18 Wis. 109; *Milwaukee Gaslight Co. v. Schooner Gamecock*, 23 Wis. 144; *Wisconsin River Improvement Co. v. Lyons*, 30 Wis. 61. Compare *Woodburn v. Kilbourn Manuf. Co.*, 1 Abb. U. S. 158; s. c. 1 Biss. 546. In the cases in the first and third McLean, however, the opinion was expressed that the States might lawfully improve the navigable waters and the carrying-places between, and charge tolls upon the use of the improvement to obtain reimbursement of their expenditures.

In some of the States formed out of the territory acquired by the

* Every colony had also its charter, emanating from the [* 26] Crown, and constituting its colonial constitution. All but two of these were swept away by the whirlwind of revolution, and others substituted which had been framed by the people themselves, through the agency of conventions which they had chosen. The exceptions were the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island, each of which had continued its government as a State under the colonial charter, finding it sufficient and satisfactory for the time being, and accepting it as the constitution for the State.¹

New States have since, from time * to time, formed con- [* 27] stitutions either regularly in pursuance of enabling acts passed by Congress, or irregularly by the spontaneous action of the people, or under the direction of the legislative or executive authority of the Territory to which the State succeeded. Where irregularities existed, they must be regarded as having been cured by the subsequent admission of the State into the Union by Congress; and there were not wanting in the case of some States plausible reasons for insisting that such admission * had [* 28] become a matter of right, and that the necessity for an enabling act by Congress was dispensed with by the previous stipulations of the national government in acquiring the Territory from which such States were formed.² Some of these constitu-

United States from foreign powers, traces will be found of the laws existing before the change of government. Louisiana has a code peculiar to itself, based upon the civil law. Much of Mexican law, and especially as regards lands and land titles, is retained in the systems of Texas and California. In Michigan, when the acts of Parliament were repealed, it was also deemed important to repeal all laws derived from France, through the connection with the Canadian provinces, including the *Coutume de Paris*, or ancient French common law. In the mining States and Territories a peculiar species of common law, relating to mining rights and titles, has sprung up, having its origin among the miners, but recognized and enforced by the courts. Regard-

ing the canon and ecclesiastical law, and their force in this country, see *Crump v. Morgan*, 3 Ired. Eq. 91; *Le Barron v. Le Barron*, 35 Vt. 365.

¹ It is worthy of note that the first case in which a legislative enactment was declared unconstitutional and void, on the ground of incompatibility with the constitution of the State, was decided under one of these royal charters. The case was that of *Trevett v. Weeden*, decided by the Superior Court of Rhode Island in 1786. See *Arnold's History of Rhode Island*, Vol. II. c. 24. The case is further referred to, *post*, p. *160, note.

² This was the claim made on behalf of Michigan; it being insisted that the citizens, under the provisions of the ordinance of 1787, whenever the Territory acquired the requisite

tions pointed out the mode for their own modification ; others were silent on that subject ; but it has been assumed that in such cases the power to originate proceedings for that purpose rested with the legislature of the State, as the department most nearly representing its general sovereignty ; and this is doubtless the correct view to take of this subject.¹

The theory of our political system is that the ultimate sovereignty is in the people, from whom springs all legitimate authority.² The people of the Union created a national constitution, and conferred upon it powers of sovereignty over certain subjects, and the people of each State created a State government, to exercise the remaining powers of sovereignty so far as they were disposed to allow them to be exercised at all. By the constitution which they establish, they not only tie up the hands of their official agencies, but their own hands as well ; and neither the officers of the State, nor the whole people as an aggregate body, are at liberty to take action in opposition to this fundamental law. But in every State, although all persons are under the protection of the government, and obliged to conform their action to its laws, there are always some who are altogether excluded from participation in the government, and are compelled to submit to be ruled by an authority in the creation of which they have no choice. The political maxim, that government rests upon the consent of the governed, appears, therefore, to be practically subject to many exceptions ; and when we say the sovereignty of the State is vested in the people, the question very naturally presents itself, What are we to understand by *The People* as used in this connection ?

[* 29] * What *should be* the correct rule upon this subject, it does not fall within our province to consider. Upon this

population, had an absolute right to form a constitution and be admitted to the Union under it. See *Scott v. Detroit Young Men's Society's Lessee*, 1 Doug. (Mich.) 119, and the contrary opinion in *Myers v. Manhattan Bank*, 20 Ohio, 283. The debates in the Senate of the United States on the admission of Michigan to the Union go fully into this question. See *Benton's Abridgment of Congressional Debates*, Vol. XIII. pp. 69-72. And

as to the right of the people of a Territory to originate measures looking to an application for admission to the Union, see opinions of Attorneys-General, Vol. II. p. 726.

¹ See Jameson on Constitutional Conventions, c. 8.

² *McLean*, J., in *Spooner v. McConnell*, 1 McLean, 347 ; *Waite*, Ch. J., in *Mirror v. Happersett*, 21 Wall. 162, 172 ; *Potter's Dwarries on Stat.* c. 1.

men will theorize ; but the practical question lies back of the formation of the Constitution, and is addressed to the people themselves. As a practical fact, the sovereignty is vested in those persons who are permitted by the constitution of the State to exercise the elective franchise.¹ Such persons may have been designated by description in the enabling act of Congress permitting the formation of the constitution, if any such there were, or the convention which framed the constitution may have determined the qualifications of electors without external dictation. In either case, however, it was essential to subsequent good order and contentment with the government, that those classes in general should be admitted to a voice in its administration, whose exclusion on the ground of want of capacity or of moral fitness could not reasonably and to the general satisfaction be defended.

Certain classes have been almost universally excluded, — the slave, because he is assumed to be wanting alike in the intelligence and the freedom of will essential to the proper exercise of the right ; the woman, from mixed motives, but mainly perhaps, because, in the natural relation of marriage, she was supposed to be under the influence of her husband, and, where the common law prevailed, actually was in a condition of dependence upon and subjection to him ;² the infant, for reasons similar to those which exclude the slave ; the idiot, the lunatic, and the felon, on obvious grounds ; and sometimes other classes for whose exclusion it is difficult to assign reasons so generally satisfactory.

The theory in these cases we take to be that classes are excluded because they lack either the intelligence, the virtue, or the liberty of action essential to the proper exercise of the elective franchise. But the rule by which the presence or absence of these qualifications is to be determined, it is not easy to establish on grounds the reason and propriety of which shall be accepted by all. It must be one that is definite and easy of application, and it must be made permanent, or an accidental majority may at any time change it, so as to usurp all power to themselves. But to be definite and easy of application, it must also be arbitrary. The

¹ "The people, for political purposes, must be considered as synonymous with qualified voters." Blair v. Ridgely, 41 Mo. 63.

reasons for the exclusion in the opinions in *Bradwell v. State*, 16 Wall. 130, and *Minor v. Happersett*, 21 Wall. 362.

² Some reference is made to the

infant of tender years is wanting in competency, but he is daily acquiring it, and a period is fixed at which he shall conclusively be presumed to possess what is requisite. The alien may know nothing of our political system and laws, and he is excluded [* 30] until * he has been domiciled in the country for a period judged to be sufficiently long to make him familiar with its institutions; races are sometimes excluded arbitrarily; and at times in some of the States the possession of a certain amount of property, or the capacity to read, seem to have been regarded as essential to satisfactory proof of sufficient freedom of action and intelligence.¹

Whatever rule is once established must remain fixed until those who by means of it have the power of the State put into their hands see fit to invite others to participate with them in its exercise. Any attempt of the excluded classes to assert their right to a share in the government, otherwise than by operating upon the public opinion of those who possess the right of suffrage, would be regarded as an attempt at revolution, to be put down by the strong arm of the government of the State, assisted, if need be, by the military power of the Union.²

In regard to the formation and amendment of State constitutions, the following appear to be settled principles of American constitutional law : —

I. The people of the several Territories may form for themselves State constitutions whenever enabling acts for that purpose are passed by Congress, but only in the manner allowed by such enabling acts, and through the action of such persons as the enabling acts shall clothe with the elective franchise to that end. If the people of a Territory shall, of their own motion, without such enabling act, meet in convention, frame and adopt a consti-

¹ *State v. Woodruff*, 2 Day, 504; *Catlin v. Smith*, 2 S. & R. 267; *Opinions of Judges*, 18 Pick. 575. See Mr. Bancroft's synopsis of the first constitutions of the original States, in his *History of the American Revolution*, c. 5. For some local elections it is quite common still to require property qualification or the payment of taxes in the voter; but statutes of this description are generally construed liberally. See *Craw-*

ford v. Wilson, 4 Barb. 504. Many special statutes, referring to the people of a municipality the question of voting aid to internal improvements, have confined the right of voting on the question to tax-payers.

² The case of Rhode Island and the "Dorr Rebellion," so popularly known, will be fresh in the minds of all. For a discussion of some of the legal aspects of the case, see *Luther v. Borden*, 7 How. 1.

tution, and demand admission to the Union under it, such action does not entitle them, as matter of right, to be recognized as a State; but the power that can admit can also refuse, and the territorial status must be continued until Congress shall be satisfied to suffer the Territory to become a State. There are always in these cases questions of policy as well as of constitutional law to be determined by the Congress before admission becomes a matter of right; — whether the constitution formed is republican; whether suitable and proper State boundaries have been fixed upon; whether the population is sufficient; whether the proper qualifications for the exercise of the elective franchise have been agreed to; whether any inveterate evil exists in the Territory which is now subject to control, but which might be perpetuated under a State government; — these and the like questions, in which the whole country is interested, cannot be finally solved by the people of the Territory for themselves, but the final decision must rest with Congress, and the judgment must be favorable before admission can be claimed or expected.¹

II. In the original States, and all others subsequently admitted to the Union, the power to amend or revise their constitutions resides in the great body of the people as an organized body politic, who, being vested with ultimate sovereignty, and the source of all State authority, have power to control and alter at will the law which they have made. But the people, in the legal sense, must be understood to be those who, by the existing constitution, are clothed with political rights, and who, while that instrument remains, will be the sole organs through which the will of the body politic can be expressed.²

III. But the will of the people to this end can only be expressed in the legitimate modes by which such a body politic can act, and which must either be prescribed by the constitution whose revision or amendment is sought, or by an act of the legis-

¹ When a constitution has been adopted by the people of a Territory, preparatory to admission as a State, and Congress prescribes certain changes and additions to be adopted by the legislature as part of the constitution, and declares such changes and additions to be fundamental conditions of admission of the State, and

the legislature accepts such changes and additions, and it is admitted, the changes become a part of the constitution, and binding as such, although not submitted to the people for approval. *Brittle v. People*, 2 Neb. 198.

² *Luther v. Borden*, 7 How. 1; *Wells v. Bain*, 75 Penn. St. 39.

lative department of the State, which alone would be authorized to speak for the people upon this subject, and to point out a mode for the expression of their will in the absence of any provision for amendment or revision contained in the constitution itself.¹

¹ Opinions of the Judges, 6 Cush. 573; *Collier v. Frierson*, 24 Ala. 100. The first constitution of New York contained no provision for its own amendment, and Mr. Hammond, in his *Political History of New York*, Vol. I. c. 26, gives a very interesting account of the controversy before the legislature and in the council of revision as to the power of the legislature to call a convention for revision, and as to the mode of submitting its work to the people. In *Collier v. Frierson*, 24 Ala. 108, it appeared that the legislature had proposed eight different amendments to be submitted to the people at the same time; the people had approved them, and all the requisite proceedings to make them a part of the constitution had been had, except that in the subsequent legislature the resolution for their ratification had by mistake omitted to recite one of them. On the question whether this one had been adopted, we quote from the opinion of the court: "The constitution can be amended in but two ways: either by the people who originally framed it, or in the mode prescribed by the instrument itself. If the last mode is pursued, the amendments must be proposed by two-thirds of each house of the general assembly; they must be published in print, at least three months before the next general election for representatives; it must appear from the returns made to the Secretary of State that a majority of those voting for representatives have voted in favor of the proposed amendments, and they must be ratified by two-thirds of each house of the next general assembly after such election,

voting by yeas and nays, the proposed amendments having been read at each session three times on three several days in each house. We entertain no doubt that to change the constitution in any other mode than by a convention, every requisition which is demanded by the instrument itself must be observed, and the omission of any one is fatal to the amendment. We scarcely deem any argument necessary to enforce this proposition. The constitution is the supreme and paramount law. The mode by which amendments are to be made under it is clearly defined. It has been said that certain acts are to be done, certain requisitions are to be observed, before a change can be effected. But to what purpose are those acts required or those requisitions enjoined, if the legislature or any department of the government can dispense with them? To do so would be to violate the instrument which they are sworn to support, and every principle of public law and sound constitutional policy requires the courts to pronounce against any amendment which is not shown to have been made in accordance with the rules prescribed by the fundamental law." See also *State v. McBride*, 4 Mo. 303. But where the constitution provided that amendments should be proposed by one general assembly, and approved and submitted to popular vote by a second, and seventeen amendments were thus approved together, and the second general assembly passed upon and submitted eight by one bill and nine by another, the submission was held sufficient and valid. *Trustees of University v. McIver*, 72 N. C. 76.

* IV. In accordance with universal practice, and from [* 32] the very necessity of the case, amendments to an existing constitution, or entire revisions of it, must be prepared and matured by some body of representatives chosen for the purpose. It is obviously impossible for the whole people to meet, prepare, and discuss the proposed alterations, and there seems to be no feasible mode by which an expression of their will can be obtained, except by asking it upon the single point of assent or disapproval. But no body of representatives, unless specially clothed with power for that purpose by the people when choosing them, can rightfully take definitive action upon amendments or revisions; they must submit the result of their deliberations to the people—who alone are competent to exercise the powers of sovereignty in framing the fundamental law—for ratification or rejection. The constitutional convention is the representative of sovereignty only in a very qualified sense, and for the specific purpose, and with the restricted authority to put in proper form the questions of amendment upon which the people are to pass; but the changes in the * fundamental law of the State must be [* 33] enacted by the people themselves.¹

V. The power of the people to amend or revise their constitutions is limited by the Constitution of the United States in the following particulars:—

1. It must not abolish the republican form of government, since such act would be revolutionary in its character, and would call for and demand direct intervention on the part of the government of the United States.²

2. It must not provide for titles of nobility, or assume to violate

¹ See, upon this subject, Jameson on the Constitutional Convention, §§ 415–418, and 479–520. This work is so complete and satisfactory in its treatment of the general subject, as to leave little to be said by one who shall afterwards attempt to cover the same ground. Where a convention to frame amendments to the constitution is sitting under a legislative act from which all its authority is derived, the submission of its labors to a vote of the people in a manner different from that prescribed by the act is nugatory. *Wells v. Bain*, 75

Penn. St. 39. Such a convention has no inherent rights; it has delegated powers only, and must keep within them. *Wood's Appeal*, 75 Penn. St. 59. Compare *Loomis v. Jackson*, 6 W. Va. 613, 708. The Supreme Court of Missouri have expressed the opinion that it was competent for a convention to put a new constitution in force without submitting it to the people. *State v. Neal*, 42 Mo. 119. But this was *obiter*.

² Const. of U. S. art. 4, § 4; *Federalist*, No. 43.

the obligation of any contract, or attain persons of crime, or provide *ex post facto* for the punishment of acts by the courts which were innocent when committed, or contain any other provision which would, in effect, amount to the exercise of any power expressly or impliedly prohibited to the States by the Constitution of the Union. For while such provisions would not call for the direct and forcible intervention of the government of the Union, it would be the duty of the courts, both State and national, to refuse to enforce them, and to declare them altogether void, as much when enacted by the people in their primary capacity as makers of the fundamental law, as when enacted in the form of statutes through the delegated power of their legislatures.¹

VI. Subject to the foregoing principles and limitations, each State must judge for itself what provisions shall be inserted in its constitution ; how the powers of government shall be apportioned in order to their proper exercise ; what protection shall be thrown around the person or property of the citizen ; and to what extent private rights shall be required to yield to the general [* 34] good.² * And the courts of the State, still more the

¹ *Cummings v. Missouri*, 4 Wall. 277 ; *Jefferson Branch Bank v. Skelly*, 1 Black, 436 ; *State v. Keith*, 63 N. C. 140 ; *Jackoway v. Denton*, 25 Ark. 525 ; *Union Bank v. State*, 9 Yerg. 490 ; *Girdner v. Stephens*, 1 Heis. 280 ; *Lawson v. Jeffries*, 47 Miss. 686 ; s. c. 12 Am. Rep. 342 ; *Penn v. Tollison*, 26 Ark. 545 ; *Dodge v. Woolsey*, 18 How. 331 ; *Pacific R. R. Co. v. Maguire*, 20 Wall. 36 ; *Railroad Co. v. McClure*, 10 Wall. 511 ; *White v. Hart*, 13 Wall. 649. The fact that the constitution containing the obnoxious provision was submitted to Congress, and the State admitted to full rights in the Union under it, cannot make such provision valid. *Gunn v. Barry*, 15 Wall. 610.

² *Matter of the Reciprocity Bank*, 22 N. Y. 9 ; *McMullen v. Hodge*, 5 Texas, 34 ; *Penn v. Tollison*, 26 Ark. 545 ; *Matter of Oliver Lee & Co.'s Bank*, 21 N. Y. 9. In the case last cited, *Denio, J.*, says: "The [constitutional] convention was not obliged,

like the legislative bodies, to look carefully to the preservation of vested rights. It was competent to deal, subject to ratification by the people and to the Constitution of the federal government, with all private and social rights, and with all the existing laws and institutions of the State. If the convention had so willed, and the people had concurred, all former charters and grants might have been annihilated. When, therefore, we are seeking for the true construction of a constitutional provision, we are constantly to bear in mind that its authors were not executing a delegated authority, limited by other constitutional restraints, but are to look upon them as the founders of a State, intent only upon establishing such principles as seemed best calculated to produce good government and promote the public happiness, at the expense of any and all existing institutions which might stand in their way."

courts of the Union, would be precluded from inquiring into the justice of their action, or questioning its validity, because of any supposed conflict with fundamental rules of right or of government, unless they should be able to show collision at some point between the instrument thus formed and that paramount law which constitutes, in regard to the subjects it covers, the fundamental rule of action throughout the whole United States.¹

How far the constitution of a State shall descend into the particulars of government is a question of policy addressed to the convention which forms it. Certain things are to be looked for in all these instruments; though even as to these there is great variety, not only of substance, but also in the minuteness of their provisions to meet particular cases.

I. We are to expect a general framework of government to be designed, under which the sovereignty of the people is to be exercised by representatives chosen for the purpose, in such manner as the instrument provides, and with such reservations as it makes.

¹ All the State constitutions now contain within themselves provisions for their amendment. Some require the question of calling a convention to revise the constitution to be submitted to the people at stated periods; others leave it to the legislature to call a convention, or to submit to the people the question of calling one; while the major part allow the legislature to mature specific amendments to be submitted to the people separately, and these become a part of the constitution if adopted by the requisite vote.

When the late rebellion had been put down by the military forces of the United States, and the State governments which constituted a part of the disloyal system had been displaced, serious questions were raised as to the proper steps to be taken in order to restore the States to their harmonious relations to the Union. These questions, and the controversy over them, constituted an important part of the history of our country during the administration of Presi-

dent Johnson; but as it is the hope and trust of our people that the occasion for discussing such questions will never arise again, we do not occupy space with them in this work. It suffices for the present to say, that Congress claimed, insisted upon, and enforced the right to prescribe the steps to be taken and the conditions to be observed in order to restore these States to their former positions in the Union, and the right also to determine when the prescribed conditions had been complied with, so as to entitle them to representation in Congress. There is some discussion of the general subject in *Texas v. White*, 7 Wall. 700. And see *Gunn v. Barry*, 15 Wall. 610.

It has been decided in some cases that a constitution is to have effect from the time of its adoption by the people, and not from the time of the admission of the State into the Union by Congress. *Scott v. Young Men's Society's Lessee*, 1 Doug. (Mich.) 119; *Campbell v. Fields*, 35 Texas, 751.

II. Generally the qualifications for the right of suffrage will be declared, as well as the conditions under which it shall be exercised.

III. The usual checks and balances of republican government, in which consist its chief excellencies, will be retained. The most important of these are the separate departments for the exercise of legislative, executive, and judicial power; and these are to be kept as distinct and separate as possible, except in so far as the action of one is made to constitute a restraint upon the action of the others, to keep them within proper bounds, and to prevent hasty and improvident action. Upon legislative action there is, first, the check of the executive, who will generally be clothed with a qualified veto power, and who may refuse to execute laws deemed unconstitutional; and, second, the check of the judiciary, who may annul unconstitutional laws, and punish those concerned in enforcing them. Upon judicial action there is the legislative check, which consists in the power to prescribe rules for the courts, and perhaps to restrict their authority; and the executive check, of refusing aid in enforcing any judgments which are believed to be in excess of jurisdiction. Upon executive action the legislature has a power of restraint, corresponding to that which it exercises upon judicial action; and the judiciary may punish executive agents for any action in excess of executive authority. And the legislative department has an important restraint upon both the executive and the judiciary, in the power of impeachment for illegal or oppressive action, or for any failure to perform official duty. The executive, in refusing to execute a legislative enactment, will always do so with the peril of impeachment in view.

IV. Local self-government having always been a part of the English and American systems, we shall look for its recognition in any such instrument. And even if not expressly recognized, it is still to be understood that all these instruments are framed with its present existence and anticipated continuance in view.¹

V. We shall also expect a declaration of rights for the protection of individuals and minorities. This declaration usually contains the following classes of provisions: —

1. Those declaratory of the general principles of republican

¹ *Park Commissioners v. Common Council of Detroit*, 28 Mich. 228; *People v. Albertson*, 55 N. Y. 50.

government; such as, that all freemen, when they form a social compact, are equal, and no man, or set of men, is entitled to exclusive, separate public emoluments or privileges from the community, but in consideration of public services; that absolute, arbitrary power over the lives, liberty, and property of freemen exists nowhere in a republic, not even in the largest majority; that all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety, happiness, security, and the protection of property; that for the advancement of these ends they have at all times an inalienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform, or abolish their government in such manner as they may think proper; that all elections shall be free and equal; that no power of suspending the laws shall be exercised except by the legislature or its authority; that standing armies are not to be maintained in time of peace; that representation shall be in proportion to population; that the people shall have the right freely to assemble to consult of the common good, to instruct their representatives, and petition for redress of grievances; and the like.

2. Those declaratory of the fundamental rights of the citizen: as that all men are by nature free and independent, and have certain inalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness; that the right to property is before and higher than any constitutional * sanction; } that the free exercise and enjoyment [* 36] of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall for ever be allowed; ¹ that every man may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that right; that every man may bear arms for the defence of himself and of the State; that the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, nor shall soldiers be quartered upon citizens in time of peace; and the like.

3. Those declaratory of the principles which ensure to the citizen an impartial trial, and protect him in his life, liberty, and property against the arbitrary action of those in authority: as that no bill

¹ Hale v. Everett, 53 N. H. 9; Board of Education v. Minor, 23 Ohio, N. S. 211.

of attainder or *ex post facto* law shall be passed ; that the right to trial by jury shall be preserved ; that excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive punishments inflicted ; that no person shall be subject to be twice put in jeopardy for the same offence, nor be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law ; that private property shall not be taken for public use without compensation ; and the like.

Other clauses are sometimes added declaratory of the principles of morality and virtue ; and it is also sometimes expressly declared — what indeed is implied without the declaration — that every thing in the declaration of rights contained is excepted out of the general powers of government, and all laws contrary thereto shall be void.

Many other things are commonly found in these charters of government ;¹ but since, while they continue in force, they are to remain absolute and unchangeable rules of action and decision, it is obvious that they should not be made to embrace within their iron grasp those subjects in regard to which the policy or interest of the State or of its people may vary from time to time, and which are therefore more properly left to the control of the legislature, which can more easily and speedily make the required changes.

□ In considering State constitutions we must not commit the mistake of supposing that, because individual rights are guarded and protected by them, they must also be considered as owing their origin to them. These instruments measure the powers of the rulers, but they do not measure the rights of the governed.

[*37] * “ What is a constitution, and what are its objects ? It is easier to tell what it is not than what it is. It is not the beginning of a community, nor the origin of private rights ; it is not the fountain of law, nor the incipient state of government ;

¹ “ This, then, is the office of a written [free] constitution: to delegate to various public functionaries such of the powers of government as the people do not intend to exercise for themselves; to classify these powers, according to their nature, and to commit them to separate agents; to provide for the choice of these agents by

the people; to ascertain, limit, and define the extent of the authority thus delegated ; and to reserve to the people their sovereignty over all things not expressly committed to their representatives.” E. P. Hurlbut in *Human Rights and their Political Guaranties*.

it is not the cause, but consequence, of personal and political freedom ; it grants no rights to the people, but is the creature of their power, the instrument of their convenience. Designed for their protection in the enjoyment of the rights and powers which they possessed before the constitution was made, it is but the framework of the political government, and necessarily based upon the pre-existing condition of laws, rights, habits, and modes of thought. There is nothing primitive in it: it is all derived from a known source. It presupposes an organized society, law, order, property, personal freedom, a love of political liberty, and enough of cultivated intelligence to know how to guard it against the encroachments of tyranny. A written constitution is in every instance a limitation upon the powers of government in the hands of agents ; for there never was a written republican constitution which delegated to functionaries all the latent powers which lie dormant in every nation, and are boundless in extent, and incapable of definition.”¹]

¹ *Hamilton v. St. Louis County Court*, 15 Mo. 18, per *Bates, arguendo*. And see *Matter of Oliver Lee & Co.’s Bank*, 21 N. Y. 9; *Lee v. State*, 26 Ark. 265-6. “Written constitutions sanctify and confirm great principles, but the latter are prior in existence to the former.” 2 Webster’s Works, 392. See also 1 Bl. Com. 124; 2 Story, *Life and Letters*, 278; Sidney on Government, c. 3, secs. 27 and 33. “If this charter of State government which we call a constitution were all there was of constitutional command; if the usages, the customs, the maxims, that have sprung from the habits of life, modes of thought, methods of trying facts by the neighborhood, and mutual responsibility in neighborhood interests ; the precepts that have come to us from the revolutions which overturned tyrannies; the sentiments of manly independence and self-control which impelled our ancestors to sum-

mon the local community to redress local evils, instead of relying upon king or legislature at a distance to do so, — if a recognition of all these were to be stricken from the body of our constitutional law, a lifeless skeleton might remain, but the living spirit, that which gives it force and attraction, which makes it valuable, and draws to it the affections of the people; that which distinguishes it from the numberless constitutions, so called, which in Europe have been set up and thrown down within the last hundred years, many of which, in their expressions, seemed equally fair and to possess equal promise with ours, and have only been wanting in the support and vitality which these alone can give, — this living and breathing spirit which supplies the interpretation of the words of the written charter would be utterly lost and gone.” *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 Mich. 44-107.

[* 38]

* CHAPTER IV.

OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF STATE CONSTITUTIONS.

THE deficiencies of human language are such that if written instruments were always prepared carefully by persons skilled in the use of words, we should still expect to find their meaning often drawn in question, or at least to meet with difficulties in their practical application. But when draughtsmen are careless or incompetent, these difficulties are greatly increased, and they multiply rapidly when the instruments are to be applied, not only to the subjects directly within the contemplation of those who framed them, but also to a great variety of new circumstances which could not have been anticipated, but which must nevertheless be governed by the general rules which the instruments establish. Moreover, the different points of view from which different interests regard these instruments incline them to different views of the instruments themselves. All these circumstances tend to give to the subjects of interpretation and construction great prominence in the practical administration of the law, and to suggest questions which often are of no little difficulty.

Interpretation differs from construction in that the former "is the act of finding out the true sense of any form of words; that is, the sense which their author intended to convey; and of enabling others to derive from them the same idea which the author intended to convey. Construction, on the other hand, is the drawing of conclusions respecting subjects that lie beyond the direct expressions of the text, from elements known from and given in the text; conclusions which are in the spirit, though not in the letter of the text. Interpretation only takes place if the text conveys some meaning or other. But construction is resorted to when, in comparing two different writings of the same individual, or two different enactments by the same legislative body, there is found contradiction where there was evidently no

intention of such contradiction one of another, or where it happens that part of a writing or declaration contradicts the rest. When this is the case, and the nature of the document or declaration, or whatever else it may be, is such as not to allow us to consider the whole as being invalidated by a partial or other contradiction, then resort must be had to construction; so, too, if found to act in cases which have not been foreseen by the framers of those rules, by which we are nevertheless obliged, for some binding reason, faithfully to regulate as well as we can our action respecting the unforeseen case."¹ In common use, however, the word *construction* is generally employed in the law in a sense embracing all that is properly covered by both when each is used in a sense strictly and technically correct; and we shall so employ it in the present chapter.

From the earliest periods in the history of * written [* 39] law, rules of construction, sometimes based upon sound reason, and seeking the real intent of the instrument, and at other times altogether arbitrary or fanciful, have been laid down by those who have assumed to instruct in the law, or who have been called upon to administer it, by the aid of which the meaning of the instrument was to be resolved. Some of these rules have been applied to particular classes of instruments only; others are more general in their application, and, so far as they are sound, may be made use of in any case where the meaning of a writing is in dispute. To such of these as seem important in constitutional law we shall refer, and illustrate them by references to reported cases, in which they have been applied.

A few preliminary words may not be out of place, upon the questions, who are to apply these rules; what person, body, or department is to enforce the construction; and how far a determination, when once made, is to be binding upon other persons, bodies, or departments.

We have already seen that we are to expect in every constitution an apportionment of the powers of government. We shall

¹ Lieber, *Legal and Political Hermeneutics*. See Smith on Stat. and Const. Construction, 600. Bouvier defines the two terms succinctly as follows: "*Interpretation*, the discovery and representation of the true meaning of any signs used to convey ideas."

"*Construction*, in practice, determining the meaning and application as to the case in question of the provisions of a constitution, statute, will, or other instrument, or of an oral agreement." Law Dic.

also find certain duties imposed upon the several departments, as well as upon specified officers in each, and we shall likewise discover that the constitution has sought to hedge about their action in various ways, with a view to the protection of individual rights, and the proper separation of duties. And wherever any one is called upon to perform any constitutional duty, or to do any act in respect to which it can be supposed that the constitution has spoken, it is obvious that a question of construction may at once arise, upon which some one must decide before the duty is performed or the act done. From the very nature of the case, this decision must commonly be made by the person, body, or department upon whom the duty is devolved, or from whom the act is required.

Let us suppose that the constitution requires of the [* 40] legislature, * that, in establishing municipal corporations, it shall restrict their powers of taxation; and a city charter is proposed which confines the right of taxation to the raising of money for certain specified purposes, but in regard to those purposes leaves it unlimited; or which allows to the municipality unlimited choice of purposes, but restricts the rate; or which permits persons to be taxed indefinitely, but limits the taxation of property: in either of these cases the question at once arises, whether the limitation in the charter is such a restriction as the constitution intends. Let us suppose, again, that a board of supervisors is, by the constitution, authorized to borrow money upon the credit of the county for any county purpose, and that they are asked to issue bonds in order to purchase stock in some railway company which proposes to construct a road across the county; and the proposition is met with the query, Is this a county purpose, and can the issue of bonds be regarded as a borrowing of money, within the meaning of the people as expressed in the constitution? And once again: let us suppose that the governor is empowered to convene the legislature on extraordinary occasions, and he is requested to do so in order to provide for a class of private claims whose holders are urgent; can this with any propriety be deemed an extraordinary occasion?

In these and the like cases our constitutions have provided no tribunal for the specific duty of solving in advance the questions which arise. In a few of the States, indeed, the legislative department has been empowered by the constitution to call upon

the courts for their opinion upon the constitutional validity of a proposed law, in order that, if it be adjudged without warrant, the legislature may abstain from enacting it.¹ But those provisions are not often to be met with, and judicial decisions, especially upon delicate and difficult questions of constitutional law, can seldom be entirely satisfactory when made, as they commonly will be under such calls, without the benefit of argument at the bar, and of that light upon the questions involved which might * be afforded by counsel learned in the law, and [* 41] interested in giving them a thorough investigation.

It follows, therefore, that every department of the government and every official of every department may at any time, when a duty is to be performed, be required to pass upon a question of constitutional construction.² Sometimes the case will be such that the decision when made must, from the nature of things, be conclusive and subject to no appeal or review, however erroneous it may be in the opinion of other departments or other officers; but in other cases the same question may be required to be passed upon again before the duty is completely performed. The first of these classes is where, by the constitution, a particular question is plainly addressed to the discretion or judgment of some one department or officer, so that the interference of any other department or officer, with a view to the substitution of its own

¹ By the constitutions of Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, the judges of the Supreme Court are required, when called upon by the governor, council, or either house of the legislature, to give their opinions "upon important questions of law, and upon solemn occasions." In Florida the governor, and in Rhode Island the governor or either house of the general assembly, may call for the opinions of the judges of the Supreme Court upon any question of law. In Missouri, previous to the constitution of 1875, the judges were required to give their opinions "upon important questions of constitutional law, and upon solemn occasions;" and the Supreme Court held that while the governor determined for himself whether the occasion was such

as to authorize him to call on the judges for their opinion, they must decide for themselves whether the occasion was such as to warrant the governor in making the call. *Opinions of Judges*, 49 Mo. 216.

² "It is argued that the legislature cannot give a construction to the constitution relative to private rights secured by it. It is true that the legislature, in consequence of their construction of the constitution, cannot make laws repugnant to it. But every department of government, invested with certain constitutional powers, must, in the first instance, but not exclusively, be the judge of its powers, or it could not act." *Parsons*, Ch. J., in *Kendall v. Inhabitants of Kingston*, 5 Mass. 533.

discretion or judgment in the place of that to which the constitution has confided the decision, would be impertinent and intrusive. Under every constitution cases of this description are to be met with; and, though it will sometimes be found difficult to classify them, there can be no doubt, when the case is properly determined to be one of this character, that the rule must prevail which makes the decision final.

We will suppose, again, that the constitution empowers the executive to convene the legislature on extraordinary occasions, and does not in terms authorize the intervention of any one else in determining what is and what is not such an occasion in the constitutional sense; it is obvious that the question is addressed exclusively to the executive judgment, and neither the legislative nor the judicial department can intervene to compel action if the executive decide against it, or to enjoin action if, in his opinion, the proper occasion has arisen.¹ And again, if, by the [* 42] constitution, laws are to take effect at a specified time after their passage, unless the legislature, for urgent reasons, shall otherwise order, we must perceive at once that the legislature alone is competent to pass upon the urgency of the alleged reasons.² And to take a judicial instance: If a court is

¹ In exercising his power to call out the militia in certain exigencies, the President is the exclusive and final judge when the exigency has arisen. *Martin v. Mott*, 12 Wheat. 29. In *People v. Parker*, 3 Neb. 409, s. c. 19 Am. Rep. 634, it appeared that an officer assuming to act as governor, in the absence of the governor from the State, had issued a proclamation convening the legislature in extraordinary session. The governor returned previous to the time named for the meeting, and issued a second proclamation, revoking the first. Held, that the power of convening the legislature being a discretionary power, it might be recalled before the meeting took place.

How far the decision of the legislature that a certain act is a local act concludes the courts, see *People v. Allen*, 1 Lans. 248. It is undoubted, that, when a case is within the legis-

lative discretion, the courts cannot interfere with its exercise. *State v. Hitchcock*, 1 Kan. 178; *State v. Boone County Court*, 50 Mo. 317; *Patterson v. Barlow*, 60 Penn. St. 54. The statement of legislative reasons in the preamble of an act will not affect its validity. *Lothrop v. Steadman*, 42 Conn. 583.

² See *post*, p. * 157. In *Gillinwater v. Mississippi & Atlantic Railroad Co.*, 13 Ill. 1, it was urged that a certain restriction imposed upon railroad corporations by the general railroad law was a violation of the provision of the constitution which enjoins it upon the legislature "to encourage internal improvements by passing liberal general laws of incorporation for that purpose." The court say of this provision: "This is a constitutional command to the legislature, as obligatory on it as any other of the provisions of that instru-

to pass the law they do so on the ground that the specific event was not one calling for action on their part. In such a case it is clear that, while the decision of the governor is final so far as to require the legislature to meet, it is not final in any sense that would bind the legislative department to accept and act upon it when they are called to enter upon the performance of their duty in the making of laws.¹

So also there are cases where, after the two houses of the legislature have passed upon the question, their decision is in a certain sense subject to review by the governor. If a bill is introduced the constitutionality of which is disputed, the passage of the bill by the two houses must be regarded as the expression of their judgment that, if approved, it will be a valid law. But if the constitution confers upon the governor a veto power, the same question of constitutional authority will be brought by the bill before him, since it is manifestly his duty to withhold approval from any bill which, in his opinion, the legislature ought not for any reason to pass. And what reason so valid as that the constitution confers upon them no authority to that end? In all these and the like cases, each department must act upon its own judgment, and cannot be required to do that which it regards as a violation of the constitution, on the ground solely that another department which, in the course of the discharge of its own duty, was called upon first to act, has reached the conclusion that it will not be violated by the proposed action.

But setting aside now those cases to which we have referred, where from the nature of things, and perhaps from explicit terms of the constitution, the judgment of the department or officer acting must be final, we shall find the general rule to be, that whenever an act is done which may become the subject of a suit or proceeding in court, any question of constitutional authority that was raised or that might have been raised when the act [*44] was done will be * open for consideration in such suit or proceeding, and that as the courts must finally settle the controversy, so also will they finally determine the question of constitutional law.

For the constitution of the State is higher in authority than any law, direction, or order made by any body or any officer assuming to act under it, since such body or officer must exercise a dele-

¹ See Opinions of Judges, 49 Mo. 216.

gated authority, and one that must necessarily be subservient to the instrument by which the delegation is made. In any case of conflict the fundamental law must govern, and the act in conflict with it must be treated as of no legal validity. But no mode has yet been devised by which these questions of conflict are to be discussed and settled as abstract questions, and their determination is necessary or practicable only when public or private rights would be affected thereby. They then become the subject of legal controversy; and legal controversies must be settled by the courts. The courts have thus devolved upon them the duty to pass upon the constitutional validity, sometimes of legislative, and sometimes of executive acts. And as judicial tribunals have authority, not only to judge, but also to enforce their judgments, the result of a decision against the constitutionality of a legislative or executive act will be to render it invalid through the enforcement of the paramount law in the controversy which has raised the question.¹

¹ "When laws conflict in actual cases, they [the courts] must decide which is the superior law, and which must yield; and as we have seen that, according to our principles, every officer remains answerable for what he officially does, a citizen, believing that the law he enforces is incompatible with the superior law, the constitution, simply sues the officer before the proper court as having unlawfully aggrieved him in the particular case. The court, bound to do justice to every one, is bound also to decide this case as a simple case of conflicting laws. The court does not decide directly upon the doings of the legislature. It simply decides for the case in hand, whether there actually are conflicting laws, and, if so, which is the higher law that demands obedience, when both may not be obeyed at the same time. As, however, this decision becomes the leading decision for all future cases of the same import, until, indeed, proper and legitimate authority should reverse it, the question of constitutionality is virtually decided, and it is decided in a natural, easy, legitimate, and safe manner,

according to the principle of the supremacy of the law, and the dependence of justice. It is one of the most interesting and important evolutions of the government of law, and one of the greatest protections of the citizen. It may well be called a very jewel of Anglican liberty, and one of the best fruits of our political civilization." Lieber, *Civil Liberty and Self-Government*.

"Whenever a law which the judge holds to be unconstitutional is argued in a tribunal of the United States, he may refuse to admit it as a rule; this power is the only one which is peculiar to the American magistrate, but it gives rise to immense political influence. Few laws can escape the searching analysis; for there are few which are not prejudicial to some private interest or other, and none which may not be brought before a court of justice by the choice of parties, or by the necessity of the case. But from the time that a judge has refused to apply any given law in a case, that law loses a portion of its moral sanction. The persons to whose interest it is prejudicial learn

[* 45] * The same conclusion is reached by stating in consecutive order a few familiar maxims of the law. The administration of public justice is referred to the courts. To perform this duty, the first requisite is to ascertain the facts, and the next to determine the law applicable to such facts. The constitution is the fundamental law of the State, in opposition to which any other law, or any direction or order, must be inoperative and void. If, therefore, such other law, direction, or order seems to be applicable to the facts, but on comparison with the fundamental law the latter is found to be in conflict with it, the court, in declaring what the law of the case is, must necessarily determine its invalidity, and thereby in effect annul it.¹ The right and the power of the courts to do this are so plain,

[* 46] * and the duty is so generally — we may almost say universally — conceded, that we should not be justified in

that means exist for evading its authority; and similar suits are multiplied until it becomes powerless. One of two alternatives must then be resorted to, — the people must alter the constitution, or the legislature must repeal the law.” De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, c. 6.

¹ “It is idle to say that the authority of each branch of the government is defined and limited by the constitution, if there be not an independent power able and willing to enforce the limitations. Experience proves that the constitution is thoughtlessly but habitually violated; and the sacrifice of individual rights is too remotely connected with the objects and contests of the masses to attract their attention. From its very position it is apparent that the conservative power is lodged in the judiciary, which, in the exercise of its undoubted rights, is bound to meet any emergency; else causes would be decided, not only by the legislature, but sometimes without hearing or evidence.” Per *Gibson*, Ch. J., in *De Chastellux v. Fairchild*, 15 Penn. St. 18.

“Nor will this conclusion, to use

the language of one of our most eminent jurists and statesmen, by any means suppose a superiority of the judicial to the legislative power. It will only be supposing that the power of the people is superior to both; and that where the will of the legislature, declared in its statutes, stands in opposition to that declared by the people in the constitution, the judges ought to be governed by the latter rather than the former. They ought to regulate their decisions by the fundamental laws rather than by those which are not fundamental. Neither would we, in doing this, be understood as impugning the honest intentions, or sacred regard to justice, which we most cheerfully accord to the legislature. But to be above error is to possess an entire attribute of the Deity; and to spurn its correction, is to reduce to the same degraded level the most noble and the meanest of his works.” *Bates v. Kimball*, 2 Chip. 77.

“Without the limitations and restraints usually found in written constitutions, the government could have no elements of permanence and durability; and the distribution of its

wearying the patience of the reader in quoting from the very numerous authorities upon the subject.¹

* *Conclusiveness of Judicial Decisions.*

[* 47]

But a question which has arisen and been passed upon in one case may arise again in another, or it may present itself under

powers and the vesting their exercise in separate departments would be an idle ceremony." *Brown, J.*, in *People v. Draper*, 15 N. Y. 558.

¹ 1 Kent, 500-507; *Marbury v. Madison*, 1 Cranch, 137; Webster on the Independence of the Judiciary, Works, Vol. III. p. 29. In this speech Mr. Webster has forcibly set forth the necessity of leaving with the courts the power to enforce constitutional restrictions. "It cannot be denied," says he, "that one great object of written constitutions is, to keep the departments of government as distinct as possible; and for this purpose to impose restraints designed to have that effect. And it is equally true that there is no department on which it is more necessary to impose restraints than upon the legislature. The tendency of things is almost always to augment the power of that department in its relation to the judiciary. The judiciary is composed of few persons, and those not such as mix habitually in the pursuits and objects which most engage public men. They are not, or never should be, political men. They have often unpleasant duties to perform, and their conduct is often liable to be canvassed and censured where their reasons for it are not known or cannot be understood. The legislature holds the public purse. It fixes the compensation of all other departments; it applies as well as raises all revenue. It is a numerous body, and necessarily carries along with it a great force of public opinion. Its members are public men, in constant contact with one another and with their constit-

uents. It would seem to be plain enough that, without constitutional provisions which should be fixed and certain, such a department, in case of excitement, would be able to encroach on the judiciary." "The constitution being the supreme law, it follows, of course, that every act of the legislature contrary to that law must be void. But who shall decide this question? Shall the legislature itself decide it? If so, then the constitution ceases to be a legal, and becomes only a moral, restraint upon the legislature. If they, and they only, are to judge whether their acts be conformable to the constitution, then the constitution is admonitory or advisory only, not legally binding; because if the construction of it rests wholly with them, their discretion, in particular cases, may be in favor of very erroneous and dangerous constructions. Hence the courts of law, necessarily, when the case arises, must decide on the validity of particular acts." "Without this check, no certain limitation could exist on the exercise of legislative power." See also, as to the dangers of legislative encroachments, De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, c. 6; Story on Const. (4th ed.) § 532 and note. The legislature, though possessing a larger share of power, no more represents the sovereignty of the people than either of the other departments; it derives its authority from the same high source. *Bailey v. Philadelphia, &c. Railroad Co.*, 4 Harr. 402; *Whittington v. Polk*, 1 H. & J. 244; *McCauley v. Brooks*, 16 Cal. 11.

different circumstances for the decision of some other department or officer of the government. It therefore becomes of the highest importance to know whether a principle once authoritatively declared is to be regarded as conclusively settled for the guidance, not only of the court declaring it, but of all courts and all departments of the government; or whether, on the other hand, the decision settles the particular controversy only, so that a different decision may be possible, or, considering the diversity of human judgments, even probable, whenever in any new controversy other tribunals may be required to examine and decide upon the same question.

In some cases and for some purposes the conclusiveness of a judicial determination is, beyond question, final and absolute. A decision once made in a particular controversy, by the highest court empowered to pass upon it, is conclusive upon the parties to the litigation and their privies, and they are not allowed afterwards to revive the controversy in a new proceeding for the purpose of raising the same or any other questions. The matter in dispute has become *res judicata*; a thing definitely settled by judicial decision; and the judgment of the court imports absolute verity. Whatever the question involved, — whether the interpretation of a private contract, the legality of an individual act, or the validity of a legislative enactment, — the rule of finality is the same. The controversy has been adjudged; and, once finally passed upon, it is never to be renewed.¹ It must frequently

¹ *Duchess of Kingston's Case*, 11 State Trials, 261; *s. c.* 2 Smith, Lead. Cas. 424; *Young v. Black*, 7 Cranch, 567; *Chapman v. Smith*, 16 How. 114; *Aurora City v. West*, 7 Wall. 82; *Tioga R. R. Co. v. Blossburg, &c. R. R. Co.*, 20 Wall. 137; *The Rio Grande*, 23 Wall. 458; *Skelding v. Whitney*, 3 Wend. 154; *Etheredge v. Osborn*, 12 Wend. 399; *Hayes v. Reese*, 34 Barb. 151; *Hyatt v. Bates*, 35 Barb. 308; *Harris v. Harris*, 36 Barb. 88; *Madox v. Graham*, 2 Met. (Ky.) 56; *Porter v. Hill*, 9 Mass. 34; *Norton v. Doherty*, 3 Gray, 372; *Thurston v. Thurston*, 99 Mass. 39; *Way v. Lewis*, 115 Mass. 26; *Blackinton v. Blackinton*, 113 Mass. 231; *Witmer v. Schlatter*, 15 S. & R. 150; *Warner v. Scott*, 39 Penn. St. 274; *Verner v. Carson*, 66 Penn. St. 440; *Kerr v. Union Bank*, 18 Md. 396; *Whitehurst v. Rogers*, 38 Md. 503; *Wales v. Lyon*, 2 Mich. 276; *Prentiss v. Holbrook*, Mich. 372; *Van Kleeck v. Eggleston*, Mich. 511; *Newberry v. Trowbridge*, 13 Mich. 278; *Barker v. Cleveland*, Mich. 230; *Winslow v. Grindall*, Me. 64; *Slade v. Slade*, 58 Me. 157; *Crandall v. James*, 6 R. I. 144; *Balcock v. Camp*, 12 Ohio, n. s. 11; *Hawkins v. Jones*, 19 Ohio, n. s. 2; *George v. Gillespie*, 1 Greene (Iowa) 421; *Taylor v. Chambers*, 1 Iowa, 12; *Wright v. Leclair*, 3 Iowa, 241; *Clar v. Sammons*, 12 Iowa, 368; *Whittake*

lic at large are affected by the decision. And here it will be discovered that quite a different rule prevails, and that a judicial decision has no such force of absolute conclusiveness as to other parties as it is allowed to possess between the parties to the litigation in which the decision has been made, and those who have succeeded to their rights.

A party is concluded by a judgment against him from disputing its correctness, so far as the point directly involved in the case was concerned, whether the reasons upon which it was based were sound or not, and even if no reasons were given therefor. And if the parties themselves are concluded, so also should be all those who, since the decision, claim to have acquired interests in the subject-matter of the judgment from or under the parties, as personal representatives, heirs-at-law, donees, or purchasers, and who are therefore considered in the law as privies.¹ But if strangers who have no interest in that subject-matter are to be in like manner concluded, because their controversies are supposed to involve the same question of law, we shall not only be forced into a series of endless inquiries, often resulting in little satisfaction, in order to ascertain whether the question is the same, but we shall also be met by the query, whether we are not concluding parties by decisions which others have obtained in fictitious controversies and by collusion, or have suffered to pass without sufficient consideration and discussion, and which might perhaps have been given other-

wise had other parties had an opportunity of being heard.

[* 49] * We have already seen that the force of a judgment does not depend upon the reasons given therefor, or upon the circumstance that any were or were not given. If there were, they may have covered portions of the controversy only, or they may have had such reference to facts peculiar to that case, that in any other controversy, though somewhat similar in its facts, and apparently resembling it in its legal bearings, grave doubts might arise whether it ought to fall within the same general principle. If one judgment were absolutely to conclude the parties to any similar controversy, we ought at least to be able to look

¹ The question whether a judgment, by force of its recitals, shall operate as a technical estoppel, or whether it shall operate as a bar only after the proper parol evidence shall have been given to identify the subject of litigation, is one which our subject does not require us to discuss. The cases are examined fully and with discrimination in Robinson's Practice, Vol. VI.; and are also discussed in Bigelow on Estoppel.

into the judicial mind, in order that we might ascertain of a surety that all those facts which should influence the questions of law were substantially the same in each, and we ought also to be able to see that the first litigation was conducted in entire good faith, and that every consideration was presented to the court which could properly have weight in the construction and application of the law. All these things, however, are manifestly impossible; and the law therefore wisely excludes judgments from being used to the prejudice of strangers to the controversy, and restricts their conclusiveness to the parties thereto and their privies.¹ Even parties and privies are bound only so far as regards the subject-matter then involved, and would be at liberty to raise the same questions anew in a distinct controversy affecting some distinct subject-matter.²

All judgments, however, are supposed to apply the existing law to the facts of the case; and the reasons which are sufficient to influence the court to a particular conclusion in one case ought to be sufficient to bring it or any other court to the same conclusion in all other like cases where no modification of the law has intervened. There would thus be uniform rules for the administration of justice, and the same measure that is meted out * to one would be received by all others. And even [* 50] if the same or any other court, in a subsequent case, should be in doubt concerning the correctness of the decision which has been made, there are consequences of a very grave character to be contemplated and weighed before the experiment of disregarding it should be ventured upon. That state of things, when judicial decisions conflict, so that a citizen is always at a loss in regard to his rights and his duties, is a very serious evil;

¹ *Burrill v. West*, 2 N. H. 190; 516; *Floyd v. Mintsey*, 5 Rich. 361; *Davis v. Wood*, 1 Wheat. 6; *Jackson Riggins's Ex'rs v. Brown*, 12 Geo. v. *Vedder*, 3 Johns. 8; *Case v. Reeve*, 271; *Persons v. Jones*, 12 Geo. 371; 14 Johns. 79; *Alexander v. Taylor*, 4 Robinson's Practice, Vol. VII. 134 to Denio, 302; *Van Bokkelin v. Ingersoll*, 5 Wend. 315; *Smith v. Ballantyne*, 10 Paige, 101; *Orphan House v. Lawrence*, 11 Paige, 80; *Thomas v. Hubbell*, 15 N. Y. 405; *Wood v. Stephen*, 1 Serg. & R. 175; *Peterson v. Lothrop*, 34 Penn. St. 223; *Twambly v. Henley*, 4 Mass. 441; *Este v. Strong*, 2 Ohio, 401; *Cowles v. Harts*, 3 Conn. 516; *Floyd v. Mintsey*, 5 Rich. 361; *Davis v. Wood*, 1 Wheat. 6; *Jackson Riggins's Ex'rs v. Brown*, 12 Geo. 271; *Persons v. Jones*, 12 Geo. 371; *Robinson's Practice*, Vol. VII. 134 to 156; *Bigelow on Estoppel*, 46 *et seq.*

² *Van Alstine v. Railroad Co.*, 34 Barb. 28; *Taylor v. McCracken*, 2 Blackf. 260; *Cook v. Vimont*, 6 T. B. Monr. 284. See, for a discussion of this doctrine, its meaning and extent, *Spencer v. Dearth*, 43 Vt. 98, and the very full and exhaustive discussion in *Robinson's Practice*, Vol. VII.

and the alternative of accepting adjudged cases as precedents in future controversies resting upon analogous facts, and brought within the same reasons, is obviously preferable. Precedents, therefore, become important, and counsel are allowed and expected to call the attention of the court to them, not as concluding controversies, but as guides to the judicial mind. Chancellor *Kent* says: "A solemn decision upon a point of law arising in any given case becomes an authority in a like case, because it is the highest evidence which we can have of the law applicable to the subject, and the judges are bound to follow that decision so long as it stands unreversed, unless it can be shown that the law was misunderstood or misapplied in that particular case. If a decision has been made upon solemn argument and mature deliberation, the presumption is in favor of its correctness, and the community have a right to regard it as a just declaration or exposition of the law, and to regulate their actions and contracts by it. It would therefore be extremely inconvenient to the public if precedents were not duly regarded, and implicitly followed. It is by the notoriety and stability of such rules that professional men can give safe advice to those who consult them, and people in general can venture to buy and trust, and to deal with each other. If judicial decisions were to be lightly disregarded, we should disturb and unsettle the great landmarks of property. When a rule has once been deliberately adopted and declared, it ought not to be disturbed unless by a court of appeal or review, and never by the same court, except for very urgent reasons, and upon a clear manifestation of error; and if the practice were otherwise, it would be leaving us in a perplexing uncertainty as to the law." ¹

¹ 1 Kent, 475. And see *Cro. Jac.* 527; *Rex v. Cox*, 2 Burr. 787; *King v. Younger*, 5 T. R. 450; *Goodtitle v. Otway*, 7 T. R. 416; *Selby v. Bardons*, 3 B. & Ad. 17; *Fletcher v. Lord Somers*, 3 Bing. 588; *Hammond v. Anderson*, 4 Bos. & P. 69; *Lewis v. Thornton*, 6 Munf. 94; *Dugan v. Hollins*, 13 Md. 149; *Anderson v. Jackson*, 16 Johns. 402; *Goodell v. Jackson*, 20 Johns. 722; *Bates v. Releyea*, 23 Wend. 340; *Emerson v. Atwater*, 7 Mich. 12; *Nelson v. Allen*,

1 Yerg. 376; *Palmer v. Lawrence*, 5 N. Y. 389; *Kneeland v. Milwaukee*, 15 Wis. 458; *Boon v. Bowers*, 30 Miss. 246; *Frink v. Darst*, 14 Ill. 311; *Broom's Maxims*, 109. Dr. Lieber thinks the doctrine of the precedent especially valuable in a free country. "Liberty and steady progression require the principle of the precedent in all spheres. It is one of the roots with which the tree of liberty fastens in the soil of real life, and through which it receives the sap

* The doctrine of *stare decisis*, however, is only applica- [* 51]
ble, in its full force, within the territorial jurisdiction of
the courts making * the decisions, since there alone can [* 52]

of fresh existence. It is the weapon by which interference is warded off. The principle of the precedent is eminently philosophical. The English Constitution would not have developed itself without it. What is called the English Constitution consists of the fundamentals of the British polity, laid down in custom, precedent, decisions, and statutes; and the common law in it is a far greater portion than the statute law. The English Constitution is chiefly a common-law constitution; and this reflex of a continuous society in a continuous law is more truly philosophical than the theoretic and systematic, but lifeless, constitutions of recent France." Civ. Lib. and Self-Gov. See also his chapter on precedents in the *Hermeneutics*. In *Nelson v. Allen*, 1 Yerg. 376, where the constitutionality of the "Betterment Law" came under consideration, the court (*White, J.*) say: "Whatever might be my own opinion upon this question, not to assent to its settlement now, after two solemn decisions of this court, the last made upwards of fourteen years ago, and not only no opposing decision, but no attempt even by any case, during all this time, to call the point again in controversy, forming a complete acquiescence, would be, at the least, inconsistent, perhaps mischievous, and uncalled for by a correct discharge of official duty. Much respect has always been paid to the contemporaneous construction of statutes, and a forbidding caution hath always accompanied any approach towards unsettling it, dictated no doubt by easily foreseen consequences attending a sudden change of a rule of property, necessarily introductory at least of confusion, increased litigation, and the disturbance

of the peace of society. The most able judges and the greatest names on the bench have held this view of the subject, and occasionally expressed themselves to that effect, either tacitly or openly, intimating that if they had held a part in the first construction they would have been of a different opinion; but the construction having been made, they give their assent thereto. Thus Lord *Ellenborough*, in 2 East, 302, remarks: 'I think it is better to abide by that determination, than to introduce uncertainty into this branch of the law, it being often more important to have the rule settled, than to determine what it shall be. I am not, however, convinced by the reasoning in this case, and if the point were new I should think otherwise.' Lord *Mansfield*, in 1 Burr. 419, says: 'Where solemn determinations acquiesced under had settled precise cases, and a rule of property, they ought, for the sake of certainty, to be observed, as if they had originally formed a part of the text of the statute.' And Sir *James Mansfield*, in 4 B. & P. 69, says: 'I do not know how to distinguish this from the case before decided in the court. It is of greater consequence that the law should be as uniform as possible, than that the equitable claim of an individual should be attended to.'" And see *People v. Cicotte*, 16 Mich. 283.

How far a judgment rendered by a court concludes, notwithstanding it was one given under the law of necessity, in consequence of an equal division of the court, see *Durant v. Essex Co.*, 7 Wall. 107; *Morse v. Goold*, 11 N. Y. 281; and the cases collected in *Northern R. R. v. Concord R. R.*, 50 N. H. 176.

such decisions be regarded as having established any rules. Rulings made under a similar legal system elsewhere may be cited and respected for their reasons, but are not necessarily to be accepted as guides, except in so far as those reasons commend themselves to the judicial mind.¹ Great Britain and the thirteen original States had each substantially the same system of common law originally, and a decision now by one of the higher courts of Great Britain as to what the common law is upon any point is certainly entitled to great respect in any of the States, though not necessarily to be accepted as binding authority any more than the decisions in any one of the other States upon the same point. It gives us the opinions of able judges as to what the law is, but its force as an authoritative declaration must be confined to the country for which the court sits and judges. But an English decision before the Revolution is in the direct line of authority; and where a particular statute or clause of the constitution has been adopted in one State from the statutes or constitution of another, after a judicial construction had been put upon it in such last-mentioned State, it is but just to regard the construction as having been adopted, as well as the words; and all the mischiefs of disregarding precedents would follow as legitimately here as in any other case.²

¹ *Caldwell v. Gale*, 11 Mich. 77; *Kaontz v. Nabb*, 16 Md. 549; *Nelson v. Goree*, 34 Ala. 565; *Jamison v. Burton*, 43 Iowa, 282.

² *Bond v. Appleton*, 8 Mass. 472; *Rutland v. Mendon*, 1 Pick. 154; *Commonwealth v. Hartnett*, 3 Gray, 450; *Turnpike Co. v. People*, 9 Barb. 167; *Campbell v. Quinlin*, 3 Scam. 288; *Little v. Smith*, 4 Scam. 402; *Riggs v. Wilton*, 13 Ill. 15; *Tyler v. Tyler*, 19 Ill. 151; *Fisher v. Deering*, 60 Ill. 114; *Langdon v. Applegate*, 5 Ind. 327; *Clark v. Jeffersonville, &c. R. R. Co.*, 44 Ind. 248; *Fall v. Hazlerigg*, 45 Ind. 576; *Ingraham v. Regan*, 23 Miss. 213; *Adams v. Field*, 21 Vt. 266; *Drennan v. People*, 10 Mich. 169; *Daniels v. Clegg*, 28 Mich. 32; *Harrison v. Sayer*, 27 Mich. 476; *Pangborn v. Westlake*, 36 Iowa, 546; *Attorney-General v. Brunst*, 3 Wis. 787; *Poertner v. Russell*, 33 Wis.

193; *Myrick v. Hasey*, 27 Me. 9; *People v. Coleman*, 4 Cal. 46; *Bemis v. Becker*, 1 Kan. 226; *Walker v. Cincinnati*, 21 Ohio, n. s. 14; *Hess v. Pegg*, 7 Nev. 23; *Freeze v. Tripp*, 70 Ill. 496; *In re Tuller*, 79 Ill. 99; *Ex parte Mathews*, 52 Ala. 51; *Danville v. Pace*, 25 Gratt. 1. But it does not necessarily follow that the prior decision construing the law must be inflexibly followed, since the circumstances in the State adopting it may be so different as to require a different construction. *Little v. Smith*, 4 Scam. 402; *Lessee of Gray v. Askew*, 3 Ohio, 479; *Jamison v. Burton*, 43 Iowa, 282. It has very properly been held that the legislature, by enacting, without material alteration, a statute which had been gradually expounded by the highest court of the State, must be presumed to have intended that the same words

It will of course sometimes happen that a court will find a former decision so unfounded in law, so unreasonable in its deductions, or so mischievous in its consequences, as to feel compelled to disregard it. Before doing so, however, it will be well to consider whether the point involved is such as to have become a rule of property, so that titles have been acquired in reliance upon it, and vested rights will be disturbed by any change; for in such a case it may be better that the correction of the error be left to the legislature, which can control its action so * as [* 53] to make it prospective only, and thus prevent unjust consequences.¹

Whenever the case is such that judicial decisions which have been made are to be accepted as law, and followed by the courts in future cases, it is equally to be expected that they will be followed by other departments of the government also. Indeed, in

should be received in the new statute in the sense which have been attributed to them in the old. *Grace v. McElroy*, 1 Allen, 563; *Cronan v. Cotting*, 104 Mass. 245; *Low v. Blanchard*, 116 Mass. 272.

¹ "After an erroneous decision touching rights of property has been followed thirty or forty years, and even a much less time, the courts cannot retrace their steps without committing a new error nearly as great as the one at the first." *Bronson, J.*, in *Sparrow v. Kingman*, 1 N. Y. 260. See also *Emerson v. Atwater*, 7 Mich. 12; *Rothschild v. Grix*, 31 Mich. 150; *Loeb v. Mathis*, 37 Ind. 306. "It is true that when a principle of law, doubtful in its character or uncertain in the subject-matter of its application, has been settled by a series of judicial decisions, and acquiesced in for a considerable time, and important rights and interests have become established under such decisions, courts will hesitate long before they will attempt to overturn the result so long established. But when it is apparently indifferent which of two or more rules is adopted, the one which shall have been adopted by judicial sanction will be adhered

to, though it may not, at the moment, appear to be the preferable rule. But when a question involving important public or private rights, extending through all coming time, has been passed upon on a single occasion, and which decision can in no just sense be said to have been acquiesced in, it is not only the right, but the duty of the court, when properly called upon, to re-examine the questions involved, and again subject them to judicial scrutiny. We are by no means unmindful of the salutary tendency of the rule *stare decisis*, but at the same time we cannot be unmindful of the lessons furnished by our own consciousness, as well as by judicial history, of the liability to error and the advantages of review." Per *Smith, J.*, *Pratt v. Brown*, 3 Wis. 609. And see *Kneeland v. Milwaukee*, 15 Wis. 458; *Taylor v. French*, 19 Vt. 49; *Bellows v. Parsons*, 13 N. H. 256; *Hahnel v. Smith*, 15 Ohio, 134; *Day v. Munson*, 14 Ohio, n. s. 488; *Green Castle, &c. Co. v. State*, 28 Ind. 382; *Harrow v. Myers*, 29 Ind. 469; *Mead v. McGraw*, 19 Ohio, n. s. 62; *Linn v. Minor*, 4 Nev. 462; *Willis v. Owen*, 43 Tex. 41, 48; *Ram on Legal Judgment*, c. 14, § 3.

the great majority of cases, the officers of other departments have no option ; for the courts possess the power to enforce their construction of the law as well as to declare it ; and a failure to accept and follow it in one case would only create necessity for new litigation with similar result. Nevertheless, there are exceptions to this rule which embrace all those cases where new action is asked of another department, which that department is at liberty to grant or refuse for any reasons which it may regard as sufficient. We cannot conceive that, because the courts have declared an expiring corporation to have been constitutionally created, the legislature would be bound to renew its charter, or the executive to sign an act for that purpose, if doubtful of the constitutional authority, even though no other adverse reasons existed.¹ In the enactment of laws the legislature must act upon its own reasons ; mixed motives of power, justice, and policy influence its action ; and it is always justifiable and laudable to lean against a violation of the constitution. Indeed, cases must sometimes occur when a court should refrain from declaring a [* 54] statute * unconstitutional, because not clearly satisfied that it is so, though, if the judges were to act as legislators upon the question of its enactment, they ought with the same views to withhold their assent, from grave doubts upon that subject. The duty is different in the two cases, and presumptions may control in one which do not exist in the other. But those cases where new legislation is sought stand by themselves, and are not precedents for those which involve only considerations concerning the constitutional validity of existing enactments. The general acceptance of judicial decisions as authoritative, by each and all, can alone prevent confusion, doubt, and uncertainty, and any other course is incompatible with a true government of law.

¹ In the celebrated case of the application of the Bank of the United States for a new charter, President Jackson felt himself at liberty to act upon his own view of constitutional power, in opposition to that previously declared by the Supreme Court, and President Lincoln expressed similar views regarding the conclusiveness of the Dred Scott de-

cision upon executive and legislative action. See Story on Const. (4th ed.) § 375, note. It is notorious that while the reconstruction of States was going on, after the late civil war, Congress took especial pains in some cases to so shape its legislation that the federal Supreme Court should have no opportunity to question and deny its validity.

Construction to be Uniform.

A cardinal rule in dealing with written instruments is that they are to receive an unvarying interpretation, and that their practical construction is to be uniform. A constitution is not to be made to mean one thing at one time, and another at some subsequent time when the circumstances may have so changed as perhaps to make a different rule in the case seem desirable. A principal share of the benefit expected from written constitutions would be lost if the rules they established were so flexible as to bend to circumstances or be modified by public opinion. It is with special reference to the varying moods of public opinion, and with a view to putting the fundamentals of government beyond their control, that these instruments are framed ; and there can be no such steady and imperceptible change in their rules as inheres in the principles of the common law. Those beneficent maxims of the common law which guard person and property have grown and expanded until they mean vastly more to us than they did to our ancestors, and are more minute, particular, and pervading in their protections ; and we may confidently look forward in the future to still further modifications in the direction of improvement. Public sentiment and action effect such changes, and the courts recognize them ; but a court or legislature which should allow a change in public sentiment to influence it in giving to a written constitution a construction not warranted by the intention of its founders, would be justly chargeable with reckless disregard of official oath and public duty ; and if its course could become a precedent, these instruments would be of *little avail. The violence of public passion is [* 55] quite as likely to be in the direction of oppression as in any other ; and the necessity for bills of rights in our fundamental laws lies mainly in the danger that the legislature will be influenced by temporary excitements and passions among the people to adopt oppressive enactments. What a court is to do, therefore, is *to declare the law as written*, leaving it to the people themselves to make such changes as new circumstances may require.¹ The meaning of the constitution is fixed when it is

¹ *People v. Morrell*, 21 Wend. 584 ; *v. Taylor*, 42 N. Y. 259 ; *Slack v. Newell v. People*, 7 N. Y. 109 ; *Hyatt Jacobs*, 8 W. Va. 612, 650.

adopted, and it is not different at any subsequent time when a court has occasion to pass upon it.¹

The Intent to govern.

The object of construction, as applied to a written constitution, is *to give effect to the intent of the people in adopting it*. In the case of all written laws, it is the intent of the law-giver that is to be enforced. But this intent is to be found in the instrument itself. It is to be presumed that language has been employed with sufficient precision to convey it, and unless examination demonstrates that the presumption does not hold good in the particular case, nothing will remain except to enforce it. "Where a law is plain and unambiguous, whether it be expressed in general or limited terms, the legislature should be intended to mean what they have plainly expressed, and consequently no room is left for construction."² Possible or even probable meanings,

¹ *Campbell, J.*, in *People v. Blodgett*, 13 Mich. 138; *Scott v. Sandford*, 19 How. 393.

² *United States v. Fisher*, 2 Cranch, 399; *Bosley v. Mattingley*, 14 B. Monr. 89; *Sturgis v. Crowninshield*, 4 Wheat. 202; *Schooner Paulina's Cargo v. United States*, 7 Cranch, 60; *Ogden v. Strong*, 2 Paine, C. C. 584; *United States v. Ragsdale*, 1 Hemp. 497; *Southwark Bank v. Commonwealth*, 26 Penn. St. 446; *Ingalls v. Cole*, 47 Me. 530; *McCluskey v. Cromwell*, 11 N. Y. 593; *Furman v. New York*, 5 Sandf. 16; *Newell v. People*, 7 N. Y. 83; *People v. N. Y. Central R. R. Co.*, 24 N. Y. 492; *Bidwell v. Whittaker*, 1 Mich. 479; *Alexander v. Worthington*, 5 Md. 471; *Cantwell v. Owens*, 14 Md. 215; *Case v. Wildridge*, 4 Ind. 51; *Spencer v. State*, 5 Ind. 49; *Putnam v. Flint*, 10 Pick. 504; *Heirs of Ludlow v. Johnson*, 3 Ohio, 553; *District Township v. Dubuque*, 7 Iowa, 262; *Pattison v. Yuba*, 13 Cal. 175; *Ezekiel v. Dixon*, 3 Kelly, 146; *In re Murphy*, 3 Zab. 180; *Attorney-General v. Detroit and Erin P. R. Co.*, Walk. Ch.

394; *Smith v. Thursby*, 28 Md. 244; *State v. Bladsdel*, 4 Nev. 241; *State v. Doron*, 5 Nev. 399; *Hyatt v. Taylor*, 42 N. Y. 259; *Johnson v. Hudson R. R. Co.*, 49 N. Y. 455; *Beardstown v. Virginia*, 76 Ill. 34; *St. Louis, &c. R. R. Co. v. Clark*, 53 Mo. 214; *Mundt v. Sheboygan, &c. R. R. Co.*, 31 Wis. 45; *Slack v. Jacobs*, 8 W. Va. 612; *Hawbecker v. Hawbecker*, 43 Md. 516. The remarks of Mr. Justice *Bronson* in *People v. Purdy*, 2 Hill, 35, are very forcible in showing the impolicy and danger of looking beyond the instrument itself to ascertain its meaning, when the terms employed are positive and free from all ambiguity. "It is said that the Constitution does not extend to *public corporations*, and therefore a majority vote was sufficient. I do not so read the Constitution. The language of the clause is: 'The assent of two-thirds of the members elected to each branch of the legislature shall be requisite to *every* bill creating, continuing, altering, or renewing *any* body politic or corporate.' These words are as broad in their signification as any which

when one is * plainly declared in the instrument itself, the [* 56] courts are not at liberty to search for elsewhere.

could have been selected for the occasion from our vocabulary, and there is not a syllable in the whole instrument tending in the slightest degree to limit or qualify the universality of the language. If the clause can be so construed that it shall not extend alike to *all* corporations, whether public or private, it may then, I think, be set down as an established fact that the English language is too poor for the framing of fundamental laws which shall limit the powers of the legislative branch of the government. No one has, I believe, pretended that the Constitution, looking at that alone, can be restricted to any particular class or description of corporations. But it is said that we may look beyond the instrument for the purpose of ascertaining the mischief against which the clause was directed, and thus restrict its operation. But who shall tell us what that mischief was? Although most men in public life are old enough to remember the time when the Constitution was framed and adopted, they are not agreed concerning the particular evils against which this clause was directed. Some suppose the clause was intended to guard against legislative corruption, and others that it was aimed at monopolies. Some are of opinion that it only extends to private without touching public corporations, while others suppose that it only restricts the power of the legislature when creating a single corporation, and not when they are made by the hundred. In this way a solemn instrument—for so I think the Constitution should be considered—is made to mean one thing by one man and something else by another, until, in the end, it is in danger of being rendered a mere dead letter; and that, too, where the language is so plain and explicit that it

is impossible to mean more than one thing, unless we first lose sight of the instrument itself, and allow ourselves to roam at large in the boundless fields of speculation. For one, I dare not venture upon such a course. Written constitutions of government will soon come to be regarded as of little value if their injunctions may be thus lightly overlooked; and the experiment of setting a boundary to power will prove a failure. We are not at liberty to presume that the framers of the Constitution, or the people who adopted it, did not understand the force of language.” See also same case, 4 Hill, 384, and *State v. King*, 44 Mo. 285. Another court has said: “This power of construction in courts is a mighty one, and, unrestrained by settled rules, would tend to throw a painful uncertainty over the effect that might be given to the most plainly worded statutes, and render courts, in reality, the legislative power of the State. Instances are not wanting to confirm this. Judge-made law has overrode the legislative department. It was the boast of Chief Justice *Pemberton*, one of the judges of the despot Charles II., and not the worst even of those times, that he had entirely outdone the Parliament in making law. We think that system of jurisprudence best and safest which controls most by fixed rules, and leaves least to the discretion of the judge; a doctrine constituting one of the points of superiority in the common law over that system which has been administered in France, where authorities had no force, and the law of each case was what the judge of the case saw fit to make it. We admit that the exercise of an unlimited discretion may, in a particular instance, be attended with a salutary result; still history informs us that

mode of discovering its true meaning is by comparing it with the other sections, and finding out the sense of one clause by the words or obvious intent of another.”¹ And in making this comparison it is not to be supposed that any words have been employed without occasion, or without intent that they should have effect as part of * the law. The rule applicable here [* 58] is, that *effect is to be given, if possible, to the whole instrument*, and to every section and clause. If different portions seem to conflict, the courts must harmonize them, if practicable, and must lean in favor of a construction which will render every word operative, rather than one which may make some idle and nugatory.²

This rule is applicable with special force to written constitutions, in which the people will be presumed to have expressed themselves in careful and measured terms, corresponding with the immense importance of the powers delegated, leaving as little as possible to implication.³ It is scarcely conceivable that a case can arise where a court would be justifiable in declaring any portion of a written constitution nugatory because of ambiguity. One part may qualify another so as to restrict its operation, or apply it otherwise than the natural construction would require if it stood by itself; but one part is not to be allowed to defeat another, if by any reasonable construction the two can be made to stand together.⁴

¹ *Stowell v. Lord Zouch*, Plowd. 365; *Chance v. Marion County*, 64 Ill. 66; *Broom's Maxims*, 521.

² *Attorney-General v. Detroit and Erin Plank Road Co.*, 2 Mich. 138; *People v. Burns*, 5 Mich. 114; *District Township v. Dubuque*, 7 Iowa, 262; *Manly v. State*, 7 Md. 135; *Parkinson v. State*, 14 Md. 184; *Belleville Railroad Co. v. Gregory*, 15 Ill. 20; *Ogden v. Strong*, 2 Paine, C. C. 584; *Ryegate v. Wardsboro*, 30 Vt. 746; *Brooks v. Mobile School Commissioners*, 31 Ala. 227; *Den v. Dubois*, 16 N. J. 285; *Den v. Schenck*, 8 N. J. 34; *Bigelow v. W. Wisconsin R. R.*, 27 Wis. 478; *Gas Company v. Wheeling*, 8 W. Va. 320.

³ *Wolcott v. Wigton*, 7 Ind. 49; *People v. Purdy*, 2 Hill, 36, per

Bronson, J.; *Greencastle Township v. Black*, 5 Ind. 557; *Green v. Weller*, 32 Miss. 650.

⁴ It is a general rule, in the construction of writings, that, a general intent appearing, it shall control the particular intent; but this rule must sometimes give way, and effect must be given to a particular intent plainly expressed in one part of a constitution, though apparently opposed to a general intent deduced from other parts. *Warren v. Sherman*, 5 Tex. 441. In *Quick v. Whitewater Township*, 7 Ind. 570, it was said that if two provisions of a written constitution are irreconcilably repugnant, that which is last in order of time and in local position is to be preferred.

In interpreting clauses we must presume that *words have been employed in their natural and ordinary meaning*. Says Marshall, Ch. J.: "The framers of the Constitution, and the people who adopted it, must be understood to have employed words in their natural sense, and to have understood what they meant."¹ This is but saying that no forced or unnatural construction is to be put upon their language; and it seems so obvious a truism [* 59] that one * expects to see it universally accepted without question; but the attempt is made so often by interested subtlety and ingenious refinement to induce the courts to force from these instruments a meaning which their framers never held, that it frequently becomes necessary to re-declare this fundamental maxim.² Narrow and technical reasoning is misplaced when

¹ Gibbons v. Ogden, 9 Wheat. 188. See Settle v. Van Enrea, 49 N. Y. 281; Jenkins v. Ervin, 8 Heisk. 456; Way v. Way, 64 Ill. 406; Stuart v. Hamilton, 66 Ill. 253; Hale v. Everett, 53 N. H. 1.

² State v. Mace, 5 Md. 337; Manly v. State, 7 Md. 135; Green v. Weller, 32 Miss. 650; Greencastle Township v. Black, 5 Ind. 570; People v. N. Y. Central Railroad Co., 34 Barb. 137, and 24 N. Y. 488; Story on Const. § 453. "The true sense in which words are used in a statute is to be ascertained generally by taking them in their ordinary and popular signification, or, if they be terms of art, in their technical signification. But it is also a cardinal rule of exposition, that the intention is to be deduced from the whole and every part of the statute, taken and compared together, from the words of the context, and such a construction adopted as will best effectuate the intention of the law-giver. One part is referred to in order to help the construction of another, and the intent of the legislature is not to be collected from any particular expression, but from a general view of the whole act. Dwarris, 658, 698, 702, 703. And when it appears that the framers have used a word in a particular sense generally in the act, it will be pre-

sumed that it was intended to be used in the same sense throughout the act, unless an intention to give it a different signification plainly appears in the particular part of the act alleged to be an exception to the general meaning indicated. Dwarris, 704 *et seq.* When words are used to which the legislature has given a plain and definite import in the act, it would be dangerous to put upon them a construction which would amount to holding that the legislature did not mean what it has expressed. It follows from these principles that the statute itself furnishes the best means of its own exposition; and if the sense in which words were intended to be used can be clearly ascertained from all its parts and provisions, the intention thus indicated shall prevail, without resorting to other means of aiding in the construction. And these familiar rules of construction apply with at least as much force to the construction of written constitutions as to statutes; the former being presumed to be framed with much greater care and consideration than the latter." Green v. Weller, 32 Miss. 678. The argument *ab inconvenienti* cannot be suffered to influence the courts by construction to prevent the evident intention. Chance v. Marion County, 64 Ill. 66.

it is brought to bear upon an instrument framed by the people themselves, for themselves, and designed as a chart upon which every man, learned and unlearned, may be able to trace the leading principles of government.

But it must not be forgotten, in construing our constitutions, that in many particulars they are but the legitimate successors of the great charters of English liberty, whose provisions declaratory of the rights of the subject have acquired a well-understood meaning, which the people must be supposed to have had in view in adopting them. We cannot understand these provisions unless we understand their history; and when we find them expressed in * technical words, and words of art, we must [* 60] suppose these words to be employed in their technical sense. When the constitution speaks of an *ex post facto* law, it means a law technically known by that designation; the meaning of the phrase having become defined in the history of constitutional law, and being so familiar to the people that it is not necessary to employ language of a more popular character to designate it. The technical sense in these cases is the sense popularly understood, because that is the sense fixed upon the words in legal and constitutional history where they have been employed for the protection of popular rights.¹

¹ It is quite possible, however, in applying constitutional maxims, to overlook entirely the reason upon which they rest, and "considering merely the letter, go but skin deep into the meaning." On the great debate on the motion for withdrawing the confidence of Parliament from the ministers, after the surrender of Cornwallis, — a debate which called out the best abilities of Fox and Pitt as well as of the ministry, and necessarily led to the discussion of the primary principle in free government, that taxation and representation shall go together, — Sir James Mariott rose, and with great gravity proceeded to say, that if taxation and representation were to go hand in hand, then Britain had an undoubted right to tax America, because she was represented in the British Par-

liament. She was represented by the members for the county of Kent, of which the thirteen provinces were a part and parcel; for in their charters they were to hold of the manor of Greenwich in Kent, of which manor they were by charter to be parcel! The opinion, it is said, "raised a very loud laugh," but Sir James continued to support it, and concluded by declaring that he would give the motion a hearty negative. Thus would he have settled a great principle of constitutional right, for which a seven years' bloody war had been waged, by putting it in the form of a meaningless legal fiction. Hansard's Debates, Vol. XXII. p. 1184. Lord Mahon, following Lord Campbell, refers the origin of this wonderful argument to Mr. Hardinge, a Welsh judge, and nephew of Lord

The Common Law to be kept in View.

It is also a very reasonable rule that a State constitution shall be understood and construed in the light and by the assistance of the common law, and with the fact in view that its rules are still left in force. By this we do not mean that the common law is to control the constitution, or that the latter is to be warped and perverted in its meaning in order that no inroads, or as few as possible, may be made in the system of common-law rules, but

only that for its definitions we are to draw from that great [* 61] fountain, and that, in judging what it means, we * are to keep in mind that it is not the beginning of law for the State, but that it assumes the existence of a well-understood system, which is still to remain in force and be administered, but under such limitations and restrictions as that instrument imposes. It is a maxim with the courts that statutes in derogation of the common law shall be construed strictly;¹ a maxim which we fear is sometimes perverted to the overthrow of the legislative intent; but there can seldom be either propriety or safety in applying this maxim to constitutions. When these instruments assume to make any change in the common law, the change designed is generally a radical one; but as they do not go minutely into particulars, as do statutes, it will sometimes be easy to defeat a provision, if courts are at liberty to say that they will presume against any intention to alter the common law further than is expressly declared. A reasonable construction is what such an instrument demands and should receive; and the real question is, what the people meant, and not how meaningless their words can be made by the application of arbitrary rules.²

Camden; 7 Mahon's Hist. 139. He was said to have been a good lawyer, but must have read the history of his country to little purpose.

¹ Broom's Maxims, 33; Sedg. on Stat. & Const. Law, 313. See *Harrison v. Leach*, 4 W. Va. 383.

² Under a clause of the constitution of Michigan which provided that "the real and personal estate of every female acquired before marriage, and all property to which she may afterwards become entitled, by gift, grant,

inheritance, or devise, shall be and remain the estate and property of such female, and shall not be liable for the debts, obligations, or engagements of her husband, and may be devised or bequeathed by her as if she were unmarried," it was held that a married woman could not sell her personal property without the consent of her husband, inasmuch as the power to do so was not expressly conferred, and the clause, being in derogation of the common law, was

As a general thing, it is to be supposed that the same [62] word is used in the same sense wherever it occurs in a constitution.¹ Here again, however, great caution must be observed in applying an arbitrary rule ; for, as Mr. Justice *Story* has well observed, “ It does not follow, either logically or grammatically, that because a word is found in one connection in the Constitution with a definite sense, therefore the same sense is to be adopted in every other connection in which it occurs. This would be to suppose that the framers weighed only the force of single words, as philologists or critics, and not whole clauses and objects, as statesmen and practical reasoners. And yet nothing has been more common than to subject the Constitution to this narrow and mischievous criticism.² Men of ingenious and subtle minds, who seek for symmetry and harmony in language, having found in the Constitution a word used in some sense, which falls in with their favorite theory of interpreting it, have made that the standard by which to measure its use in every other part of the instrument. They have thus stretched it, as it were, on the bed of Procrustes, lopping off its meaning when it seemed too large for their purposes, and extending it when it seemed too short. They have thus distorted it to the most unnatural shapes, and crippled where they have sought only to adjust its proportions

not to be extended by construction. *Brown v. Fifiold*, 4 Mich. 322. The danger of applying arbitrary rules in the construction of constitutional principles might well, as it seems to us, be illustrated by this case. For while on the one hand it might be contended that, as a provision in derogation of the common law, the one quoted should receive a strict construction, on the other hand it might be insisted with perhaps equal reason that, as a remedial provision, in furtherance of natural right and justice, it should be liberally construed, to effect the beneficial purpose had in view. Thus arbitrary rules, of directly opposite tendency and force, would be contending for the mastery in the same case. The subsequent decisions under the same provision do not appear to have followed this lead. See *White v. Zane*,

10 Mich. 333; *McKee v. Wilcox*, 11 Mich. 358; *Farr v. Sherman*, 11 Mich. 33; *Watson v. Thurber*, 11 Mich. 457; *Burdeno v. Amperse*, 14 Mich. 91; *Tong v. Marvin*, 15 Mich. 60; *Tillman v. Shackleton*, 15 Mich. 447; *Devries v. Conklin*, 22 Mich. 255; *Rankin v. West*, 25 Mich. 195. The common law is certainly to be kept in view in the interpretation of such a clause, since otherwise we do not ascertain the evil designed to be remedied, and perhaps are not able to fully understand and explain the terms employed; but it is to be looked at with a view to the real intent, rather than for the purpose of arbitrarily restraining it. See *Bishop, Law of Married Women*, §§ 18-20 and cases cited.

¹ *Brien v. Williamson*, 8 Miss. 14.

² See remarks of *Johnson, J.*, in *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 290.

according to their own opinions.”¹ And he gives many instances where, in the national Constitution, it is very manifest the same word is employed in different meanings. So that, while the rule may be sound as one of presumption merely, its force is but slight, and it must readily give way to a different intent appearing in the instrument.

Where a constitution is revised or amended, the new provisions come into operation at the same moment that those they take the place of cease to be of force; and if the new instrument re-enacts in the same words provisions which it supersedes, it is a reasonable presumption that the purpose was not to change the law in those particulars, but to continue it in uninterrupted operation. This is the rule in the case of statutes,² and it sometimes becomes important, where rights had accrued before the revision or amendment took place. Its application to the case of an amended or revised constitution would seem to be unquestionable.

Operation to be Prospective.

We shall venture also to express the opinion that a *constitution should operate prospectively only*, unless the words employed show a clear intention that it should have a retrospective effect. This is the rule in regard to statutes, and it is “one of such obvious convenience and justice, that it must always be adhered to in the construction of statutes, unless there is something on the face of the enactment putting it beyond doubt that the legislature meant it to operate retrospectively.”³ Retrospective legislation, [* 63] except * when designed to cure formal defects, or otherwise operate remedially, is commonly objectionable in principle, and apt to result in injustice; and it is a sound rule of construction which refuses lightly to imply an intent to enact it. And we are aware of no reasons applicable to ordinary legislation which do not, upon this point, apply equally well to constitutions.⁴

¹ Story on Const. § 454. And Broom’s Maxims, 28; *post*, p. *370 see *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 5 and note. Pet. 19.

² *Laude v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 33 Wis. 640; *Blackwood v. Van Vleit*, 30 Mich. 118.

³ *Moon v. Durden*, 2 Exch. 22. See *Dash v. Van Kleeck*, 7 Johns. 477; *Brown v. Wilcox*, 14 S. & M. 127; *Price v. Mott*, 52 Penn. St. 315;

⁴ In *Allbyer v. State*, 10 Ohio, n. s. 588, a question arose under the provision of the constitution that “all laws of a general nature shall have a uniform operation throughout the State.” Another clause provided that all laws then in force, not inconsistent with the constitution, should

Implications.

The implications from the provisions of a constitution are sometimes exceedingly important, and have large influence upon its construction. In regard to the Constitution of the United States the rule has been laid down, that where a general power is conferred or duty enjoined, every particular power necessary for the exercise of the one, or the performance of the other, is also conferred.¹ The same rule has been applied to the State constitution, with an important modification, by the Supreme Court of Illinois. "That other powers than those expressly granted may be, and often are, conferred by implication, is too well settled to be *doubted. Under every constitution impli- [* 64] cation must be resorted to, in order to carry out the general grants of power. A constitution cannot from its very nature enter into a minute specification of all the minor powers naturally and obviously included in and flowing from the great and important ones which are expressly granted. It is therefore established as a general rule, that when a constitution gives a general power, or enjoins a duty, it also gives, by implication, every particular

continue in force until amended or repealed. Allbyer was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment under a crimes act previously in force, applicable to Hamilton County only, and the question was, whether that act was not inconsistent with the provision above quoted, and therefore repealed by it. The court held that the provision quoted evidently had regard to future and not to past legislation, and therefore was not repealed. A similar decision was made in *State v. Barbee*, 3 Ind. 258. See also *State v. Thompson*, 2 Kan. 432; *Slack v. Maysville, &c. R R. Co.*, 13 B. Monr. 1; *State v. Macon County Court*, 41 Mo. 453; *N. C. Coal Co. v. G. C. Coal & Iron Co.*, 37 Md. 557. In *Matter of Oliver Lee & Co.'s Bank*, 21 N. Y. 12, *Denio, J.*, says: "The rule laid down in *Dash v. Van Kleeck*, 7 Johns. 477, and other cases of that class, by which the courts are admon-

ished to avoid, if possible, such an interpretation as would give a statute a retrospective operation, has but a limited application, if any, to the construction of a constitution. When, therefore, we read in the provision under consideration, that the stockholders of every banking corporation shall be subject to a certain liability, we are to attribute to the language its natural meaning, without inquiring whether private interests may not be prejudiced by such a sweeping mandate." The remark was *obiter*, as it was found that enough appeared in the constitution to show clearly that it was intended to apply to existing, as well as to subsequently created, banking institutions.

¹ Story on Const. § 430. See also *United States v. Fisher*, 2 Cranch, 358; *McCulloch v. Maryland*, 4 Wheat. 428; *North-western Fertilizing Co. v. Hyde Park*, 70 Ill. 634.

power necessary for the exercise of the one or the enjoyment of the other. The implication under this rule, however, must be a necessary, not a conjectural or argumentative one. And it is further modified by another rule, that where the means for the exercise of a granted power are given, no other or different means can be implied, as being more effective or convenient.”¹ The rule applies to the exercise of power by all departments and all officers, and will be touched upon incidentally hereafter.

Akin to this is the rule that “where a power is granted in general terms, the power is to be construed as coextensive with the terms, unless some clear restriction upon it is deducible [expressly or by implication] from the context.”² This rule has been so frequently applied as a restraint upon legislative encroachment upon the grant of power to the judiciary, that we shall content ourselves in this place with a reference to the cases collected upon this subject and given in another chapter.³

Another rule of construction is, that when the constitution defines the circumstances under which a right may be exercised or a penalty imposed, the specification is an implied prohibition against legislative interference, to add to the condition, or to extend the penalty to other cases. On this ground it has been held by the Supreme Court of Maryland, that where the constitution defines the qualifications of an officer, it is not in the power of the legislature to change or superadd to them, unless the power to do so is expressly or by necessary implication conferred by the constitution itself.⁴ Other cases recognizing the same principle are referred to in the note.⁵

¹ *Field v. People*, 2 Scam. 83. See *Fletcher v. Oliver*, 25 Ark. 298.

² Story on Const. §§ 424–426. See *Du Page County v. Jenks*, 65 Ill. 275.

³ See *post*, pp. * 87–116.

⁴ *Thomas v. Owens*, 4 Md. 189. And see *Barker v. People*, 3 Cow. 686; *Matter of Dorsey*, 7 Port. 293.

⁵ The legislature cannot add to the constitutional qualifications of voters: *Rison v. Farr*, 24 Ark. 161; *St. Joseph, &c. R. R. Co. v. Buchanan County Court*, 39 Mo. 485; *State v. Williams*, 5 Wis. 308; *State v. Baker*, 38 Wis. 71; *Monroe v. Collins*, 17 Ohio, N. S. 665; *State v. Symonds*, 57 Me. 148;

State v. Staten, 6 Cold. 243; *Davies v. McKeeby*, 5 Nev. 369; *McCafferty v. Guyer*, 59 Penn. St. 109; *Quin v. State*, 35 Md. 485; *Clayton v. Harris*, 7 Nev. 64; *Randolph v. Good*, 3 W. Va. 551; nor shorten the constitutional term of an office: *Howard v. State*, 10 Ind. 99; *Cotten v. Ellis*, 7 Jones, Law, 545; and see *post*, p. * 276, note; nor extend the constitutional term: *People v. Bull*, 46 N. Y. 57; *Goodin v. Thoman*, 10 Kan. 191; nor add to the constitutional grounds for removing an officer: *Lowe v. Commonwealth*, 3 Met. (Ky.) 237; *Brown v. Grover*, 6 Bush, 1; nor change the

** The Light which the Purpose to be accomplished may [* 65] afford in Construction.*

The considerations thus far suggested are such as have no regard to extrinsic circumstances, but are those by the aid of which we seek to arrive at the meaning of the constitution from an examination of the words employed. It is possible, however, that after we shall have made use of all the lights which the instrument itself affords, there may still be doubts to clear up and ambiguities to explain. Then, and only then, are we warranted in seeking elsewhere for aid. We are not to import difficulties into a constitution, by a consideration of extrinsic facts, when none appear upon its face. If, however, a difficulty really exists, which an examination of every part of the instrument does not enable us to remove, there are certain extrinsic aids which may be resorted to, and which are more or less satisfactory in the light they afford. Among these aids is a contemplation of *the object to be accomplished or the mischief designed to be remedied or guarded against* by the clause in which the ambiguity is met with.¹ "When we once know the reason which alone determines the will of the law-makers, we ought to interpret and apply the words used in a manner suitable and consonant to that reason, and as will be best calculated to effectuate the intent. Great caution should always be observed in the application of this rule to particular given cases; that is, we ought always to be certain that we do know, and have actually ascertained, the true and only reason which induced the act. It is never allowable to

compensation prescribed by the constitution: *King v. Hunter*, 65 N. C. 603; nor provide for the choice of officers a different mode from that prescribed by the constitution: *People v. Raymond*, 37 N. Y. 428; *Devoy v. New York*, 35 Barb. 264; 22 How. Pr. 226; *People v. Blake*, 49 Barb. 9; *People v. Albertson*, 55 N. Y. 50; *Opinions of Justices*, 117 Mass. 603; *State v. Goldspecker*, 40 N. H. 124; nor confer the characteristic duties of an officer upon another: *Warner v. People*, 2 Denio, 272; *People v. Albertson*, *supra*; *post*, p. * 277,

note. A legislative extension of an elective office is void as applied to incumbents. *People v. McKinney*, 52 N. Y. 374.

It is not unconstitutional to allow the governor to supply temporary vacancies in offices which under the constitution are elective. *Sprague v. Brown*, 40 Wis. 612.

¹ *Alexander v. Worthington*, 5 Md. 471; *District Township v. Dubuque*, 7 Iowa, 262. See *Smith v. People*, 47 N. Y. 330; *People v. Potter*, 47 N. Y. 375; *Ball v. Chadwick*, 46 Ill. 28; *Sawyer v. Insurance Co.*, 46 Vt. 697.

indulge in vague and uncertain conjecture, or in supposed reasons and views of the framers of an act, where there are none known with any degree of certainty.”¹ The prior state of the law will sometimes furnish the clue to the real meaning of the ambiguous provision,² and it is especially important to look into it if the constitution is the successor to another, and in the particular in question essential changes have apparently been made.³

[* 66] * *Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention.*

When the inquiry is directed to ascertaining the mischief designed to be remedied, or the purpose sought to be accomplished by a particular provision, it may be proper to examine the proceedings of the convention which framed the instrument.⁴ Where the proceedings clearly point out the purpose of the provision, the aid will be valuable and satisfactory; but where the question is one of abstract meaning, it will be difficult to derive from this source much reliable assistance in interpretation. Every member of such a convention acts upon such motives and reasons as influence him personally, and the motions and debates do not necessarily indicate the purpose of a majority of a convention in adopting a particular clause. It is quite possible for a clause to appear so clear and unambiguous to the members of a convention as to require neither discussion nor illustration; and the few remarks made concerning it in the convention might have a plain tendency to lead directly away from the meaning in the minds of the majority. It is equally possible for a part of the members to accept a clause in one sense and a part in another. And even if we were certain we had attained to the meaning of the convention, it is by no means to be allowed a controlling force, especially if that meaning appears not to be the one which the

¹ Smith on Stat. and Const. Construction, 634. See also remarks of *Bronson, J.*, in *Purdy v. People*, 2 Hill, 35-37.

² *Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 376; *Henry v. Tilson*, 19 Vt. 447; *Hamilton v. St. Louis County Court*, 15 Mo. 30; *People v. Gies*, 25 Mich. 83; *Servis v. Beatty*, 32 Miss. 52; *Bandel v. Isaac*, 13 Md. 302; *Story on Const.* § 428.

³ *People v. Blodgett*, 13 Mich. 127, 147.

⁴ Per *Walworth*, Chancellor, *Constant v. People*, 11 Wend. 518, and *Clark v. People*, 26 Wend. 602; per *Bronson, J.*, *Purdy v. People*, 2 Hill, 37; *People v. N. Y. Central Railroad Co.*, 24 N. Y. 496. See *State v. Kennon*, 7 Ohio, n. s. 563.

words would most naturally and obviously convey.¹ For as the constitution does not derive its force from the convention which framed, but from the people who ratified it, the intent to be arrived at is that of the people, and it is not to be supposed that they have looked for any dark or abstruse meaning in the words employed, but rather that they have accepted them in the sense most obvious to the common understanding, and ratified the instrument in the belief that that was the sense designed to be conveyed.² These proceedings therefore are less conclusive of the proper construction of the instrument than are legislative proceedings of the proper construction of a statute; since in the latter case it is the intent of the *legislature we [* 67] seek, while in the former we are endeavoring to arrive at the intent of the people through the discussions and deliberations of their representatives. The history of the calling of the convention, the causes which led to it, and the discussions and issues before the people at the time of the election of the delegates, will sometimes be quite as instructive and satisfactory as any thing to be gathered from the proceedings of the convention.

Contemporaneous and Practical Construction.

An important question which now suggests itself is this: How far the contemporaneous interpretation, or the subsequent practical construction of any particular provision of the constitution, is to have weight with the courts when the time arrives at which a judicial decision becomes necessary. Contemporaneous interpretation may indicate merely the understanding with which the people received it at the time, or it may be accompanied by acts done in putting the instrument in operation, and which necessarily assume that it is to be construed in a particular way. In the first case it can have very little force, because the evidences of the public understanding, when nothing has been done under the provision in question, must always of necessity be vague and indecisive. But where there has been a practical construction, which has been acquiesced in for a considerable period, considerations in favor of adhering to this construction sometimes present

¹ Taylor v. Taylor, 10 Minn. 126.
And see Eakin v. Racob, 12 S. & R.
352; Aldridge v. Williams, 3 How. 1;
State v. Doron, 5 Nev. 399.

² State v. Mace, 5 Md. 348; Manly
v. State, 7 Md. 147; Hills v. Chicago,
60 Ill. 86; Beardstown v. Virginia, 76
Ill. 34.

themselves to the courts with a plausibility and force which it is not easy to resist. Indeed, where a particular construction has been generally accepted as correct, and especially when this has occurred contemporaneously with the adoption of the constitution, and by those who had opportunity to understand the intention of the instrument, it is not to be denied that a strong presumption exists that the construction rightly interprets the intention. And where this has been given by officers in the discharge of their official duty, and rights have accrued in reliance upon it, which would be divested by a decision that the construction was erroneous, the argument *ab inconvenienti* is sometimes allowed to have very great weight.

The Supreme Court of the United States has had frequent occasion to consider this question. In *Stuart v. Laird*,¹ decided in 1803, that court sustained the authority of its members to sit as circuit judges on the ground of a practical construction, [* 68] * commencing with the organization of the government.

In *Martin v. Hunter's Lessee*,² Justice *Story*, after holding that the appellate power of the United States extends to cases pending in the State courts, and that the 25th section of the Judiciary Act, which authorized its exercise, was supported by the letter and spirit of the Constitution, proceeds to say: "Strong as this conclusion stands upon the general language of the Constitution, it may still derive support from other sources. It is an historical fact, that this exposition of the Constitution, extending its appellate power to State courts, was, previous to its adoption, uniformly and publicly avowed by its friends, and admitted by its enemies, as the basis of their respective reasonings both in and out of the State conventions. It is an historical fact, that at the time when the Judiciary Act was submitted to the deliberations of the First Congress, composed, as it was, not only of men of great learning and ability, but of men who had acted a principal part in framing, supporting, or opposing that Constitution, the same exposition was explicitly declared and admitted by the friends and by the opponents of that system. It is an historical fact, that the Supreme Court of the United States have from time to time sustained this appellate jurisdiction in a great variety of cases, brought from the tribunals of many of the most important

¹ 1 Cranch, 299.

² 1 Wheat. 351. See *Story on Const.* §§ 405-408.

States in the Union, and that no State tribunal has ever breathed a judicial doubt on the subject, or declined to obey the mandate of the Supreme Court until the present occasion. This weight of contemporaneous exposition by all parties, this acquiescence by enlightened State courts, and these judicial decisions by the Supreme Court through so long a period, do, as we think, place the doctrine upon a foundation of authority which cannot be shaken without delivering over the subject to perpetual and irremediable doubts." The same doctrine was subsequently supported by Chief Justice *Marshall* in a case involving the same point, and in which he says that "great weight has always been attached, and very rightly attached, to contemporaneous exposition."¹

In *Bank of United States v. Halstead*² the question was made, whether the laws of the United States authorizing the courts of the Union so to alter the form of process of execution used in the Supreme Courts of the States in September, 1789, as to subject to * execution lands and other property not thus [* 69] subject by the State laws in force at that time, were constitutional; and Mr. Justice *Thompson*, in language similar to that of Chief Justice *Marshall* in the preceding case, says: "If any doubt existed whether the act of 1792 vests such power in the courts, or with respect to its constitutionality, the practical construction given to it ought to have great weight in determining both questions." And Mr. Justice *Johnson* assigns a reason for this in a subsequent case: "Every candid mind will admit that this is a very different thing from contending that the frequent repetition of wrong will create a right. It proceeds upon the presumption that the contemporaries of the Constitution have claims to our deference on the question of right, because they had the best opportunities of informing themselves of the understanding of the framers of the Constitution, and of the sense put upon it by the people when it was adopted by them."³ Like views have been expressed by Chief Justice *Waite* in a recent decision.⁴

Great deference has been paid in all cases to the action of the

¹ *Cohens v. Virginia*, 6 Wheat. 418.

² 10 Wheat. 63.

³ *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat.

290. See *Pike v. Megoun*, 44 Mo. 499;
State v. Parkinson, 5 Nev. 15.

⁴ *Minor v. Happersett*, 21 Wall.

162. And see *Collins v. Henderson*,
11 Bush, 74, 92.

executive department, where its officers have been called upon, under the responsibilities of their official oaths, to inaugurate a new system, and where it is to be presumed they have carefully and conscientiously weighed all considerations, and endeavored to keep within the letter and the spirit of the Constitution. If the question involved is really one of doubt, the force of their judgment, especially in view of the injurious consequences that may result from disregarding it, is fairly entitled to turn the scale in the judicial mind.¹

Where, however, no ambiguity or doubt appears in the law, we think the same rule obtains here as in other cases, that the court should confine its attention to the law, and not allow extrinsic circumstances to introduce a difficulty where the language is plain. To allow force to a practical construction in such a case would be to suffer manifest perversions to defeat the evident purpose of the law-makers. [* 70] “Contemporary construction . . . can never abrogate the text; it can never fritter away its obvious sense; it can never narrow down its true limitations; it can never enlarge its natural boundaries.”² While we conceive this to be the true and only safe rule, we shall be obliged to confess that some of the cases appear, on first reading, not to have observed these limitations. In the case of *Stuart v. Laird*,³ above referred to, the practical construction was regarded as conclusive. To the objection that the judges of the Supreme Court had no right to sit as circuit judges, the court say: “It is sufficient to observe that practice and acquiescence under it for a

¹ *Union Insurance Co. v. Hoge*, 21 How. 66; *Edward's Lessee v. Darby*, 12 Wheat. 210; *Hughes v. Hughes*, 4 T. B. Monr. 42; *Chambers v. Fisk*, 22 Tex. 504; *Britton v. Ferry*, 14 Mich. 66; *Bay City v. State Treasurer*, 23 Mich. 499; *Plummer v. Plummer*, 37 Miss. 185; *Burgess v. Pue*, 2 Gill, 11; *State v. Mayhew*, 2 Gill, 487; *Coutant v. People*, 11 Wend. 511; *People v. Dayton*, 55 N. Y. 367; *Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 376; *Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank v. Smith*, 3 S. & R. 63; *Norris v. Clymer*, 2 Penn. St. 277; *Moers v. City of Reading*, 21 Penn. St. 188; *Washington v. Page*, 4 Cal. 388; *Surgett v.*

Lapice, 8 How. 68; *Bissell v. Penrose*, 8 How. 336; *Troup v. Haight*, Hopk. 267; *United States v. Gilmore*, 8 Wall. 330; *Hedgecock v. Davis*, 64 N. C. 652; *Lafayette, &c. R. R. Co. v. Geiger*, 34 Ind. 203; *Bunn v. People*, 45 Ill. 397; *Scanlan v. Childs*, 33 Wis. 663; *Fairbault v. Misener*, 20 Minn. 396.

² Story on Const. § 407. And see *Evans v. Myers*, 25 Penn. St. 116; *Sadler v. Langham*, 34 Ala. 311; *Barnes v. First Parish in Falmouth*, 6 Mass. 417; *Union Pacific R. R. Co. v. United States*, 10 Ct. of Cl. Rep. 548; s. c. in error, 91 U. S. Rep. 72.

³ 1 Cranch, 299.

period of several years, commencing with the organization of the judicial system, affords an irresistible answer, and has indeed fixed the construction. It is a contemporary interpretation of the most forcible nature. This practical exposition is too strong and obstinate to be shaken or controlled. Of course the question is at rest, and ought not now to be disturbed." This is certainly very strong language ; but that very similar in character was used by the Supreme Court of Massachusetts in one case where large and valuable estates depended upon a particular construction of a statute, and very great mischief would follow from changing it. The court said that, " although if it were now *res integra*, it might be very difficult to maintain such a construction, yet at this day the argument *ab inconvenienti* applies with great weight. We cannot shake a principle which in practice has so long and so extensively prevailed. If the practice originated in error, yet the error is now so common that it must have the force of law. The legal ground on which this provision is now supported is, that long and continued usage furnishes a contemporaneous construction which must prevail over the mere technical import of the words."¹ Language nearly as strong was also used by the Supreme Court of Maryland, where the point involved was the possession of a certain power by the legislature, which it had constantly exercised for nearly seventy years.²

It is believed, however, that in each of these cases an examination of the Constitution left in the minds of the judges sufficient *doubt upon the question of its violation to [* 71] warrant their looking elsewhere for aids in interpretation, and that the cases are not in conflict with the general rule as above laid down. Acquiescence for no length of time can legalize a clear usurpation of power, where the people have plainly expressed their will in the Constitution, and appointed judicial tribunals to enforce it. A power is frequently yielded to merely

¹ Rogers v. Goodwin, 2 Mass. 478. See also Fall v. Hazelrigg, 45 Ind. 576; Scanlan v. Childs, 33 Wis. 663.

² State v. Mayhew, 2 Gill, 487. In Essex Co. v. Pacific Mills, 14 Allen, 389, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts expressed the opinion that the constitutionality of the acts of Congress making treasury notes a

legal tender ought not to be treated by a State court as open to discussion after the notes had practically constituted the currency of the country for five years. At a still later day, however, the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States held these acts void, though they afterwards receded from this position.

because it is claimed, and it may be exercised for a long period, in violation of the constitutional prohibition, without the mischief which the Constitution was designed to guard against appearing, or without any one being sufficiently interested in the subject to raise the question; but these circumstances cannot be allowed to sanction a clear infraction of the Constitution.¹ We think we allow to contemporary and practical construction its full legitimate force when we suffer it, where it is clear and uniform, to solve in its own favor the doubts which arise on reading the instrument to be construed.²

¹ See further, on this subject, the case of *Sadler v. Langham*, 34 Ala. 311, 334; *People v. Allen*, 42 N. Y. 384.

² There are cases which clearly go further than any we have quoted, and which sustain legislative action which they hold to be usurpation, on the sole ground of long acquiescence. Thus in *Brigham v. Miller*, 17 Ohio, 446, the question was, Has the legislature power to grant divorces? The court say: "Our legislature have assumed and exercised this power for a period of more than forty years, although a clear and palpable assumption of power, and an encroachment upon the judicial department, in violation of the Constitution. To deny this long-exercised power, and declare all the consequences resulting from it void, is pregnant with fearful consequences. If it affected only the rights of property, we should not hesitate; but second marriages have been contracted and children born, and it would bastardize all these, although born under the sanction of an apparent wedlock, authorized by an act of the legislature before they were born, and in consequence of which the relation was formed which gave them birth. On account of these children, and for them only, we hesitate. And in view of this, we are constrained to content ourselves with simply declaring that the exercise of the power of granting divorces, on the part of the legislature,

is unwarranted and unconstitutional, an encroachment upon the duties of the judiciary, and a striking down of the dearest rights of individuals, without authority of law. We trust we have said enough to vindicate the Constitution, and feel confident that no department of state has any disposition to violate it, and that the evil will cease." So in *Johnson v. Joliet*, and *Chicago Railroad Co.*, 23 Ill. 207, the question was whether railroad corporations could be created by special law, without a special declaration by way of preamble that the object to be accomplished could not be attained by general law. The court say: "It is now too late to make this objection, since by the action of the general assembly under this clause, special acts have been so long the order of the day and the ruling passion with every legislature which has convened under the Constitution, until their acts of this description fill a huge and misshapen volume, and important and valuable rights are claimed under them. The clause has been wholly disregarded, and it would now produce far-spread ruin to declare such acts unconstitutional and void. It is now safer and more just to all parties, to declare that it must be understood, that in the opinion of the general assembly, at the time of passing the special act, its object could not be attained under the general law, and this without any recital by way of

* *Unjust Provisions.*

[*72]

We have elsewhere expressed the opinion that a statute cannot be declared void on the ground solely that it is repugnant to a supposed general intent or * spirit which it is thought [*73] pervades or lies concealed in the Constitution, but wholly

preamble, as in the act to incorporate the Central Railroad Company. That preamble was placed there by the writer of this opinion, and a strict compliance with this clause of the Constitution would have rendered it necessary in every subsequent act. But the legislature, in their wisdom, have thought differently, and have acted differently, until now our special legislation and its mischiefs are beyond recovery or remedy." These cases certainly presented very strong motives for declaring the law to be what it was not; but it would have been interesting and useful if either of these learned courts had enumerated the evils that must be placed in the opposite scale when the question is whether a constitutional rule shall be disregarded; not the least of which is, the encouragement of a disposition on the part of legislative bodies to set aside constitutional restrictions, in the belief that, if the unconstitutional law can once be put in force, and large interests enlisted under it, the courts will not venture to declare it void, but will submit to the usurpation, no matter how gross and daring. We agree with the Supreme Court of Indiana, that in construing constitutions, courts have nothing to do with the argument *ab inconvenienti*, and should not "bend the Constitution to suit the law of the hour." *Greencastle Township v. Black*, 5 Ind. 565; and with *Bronson*, Ch. J., in what he says in *Oakley v. Aspinwall*, 3 N. Y. 568: "It is highly probable that inconveniences will result from following the Constitution as it is written. But that consideration can have no

force with me. It is not for us, but for those who made the instrument, to supply its defects. If the legislature or the courts may take that office upon themselves, or if, under color of construction, or upon any other specious ground, they may depart from that which is plainly declared, the people may well despair of ever being able to set any boundary to the powers of the government. Written constitutions will be more than useless. Believing as I do that the success of free institutions depends upon a rigid adherence to the fundamental law, I have never yielded to considerations of expediency in expounding it. There is always some plausible reason for latitudinarian constructions which are resorted to for the purpose of acquiring power; some evil to be avoided or some good to be attained by pushing the powers of the government beyond their legitimate boundary. It is by yielding to such influences that constitutions are gradually undermined and finally overthrown. My rule has ever been to follow the fundamental law as it is written, regardless of consequences. If the law does not work well, the people can amend it; and inconveniences can be borne long enough to await that process. But if the legislature or the courts undertake to cure defects by forced and unnatural constructions, they inflict a wound upon the Constitution which nothing can heal. One step taken by the legislature or the judiciary, in enlarging the powers of the government, opens the door for another which will be sure to follow; and so the process goes on until all

unexpressed, or because, in the opinion of the court, it violates fundamental rights or principles, if it was passed in the exercise of a power which the Constitution confers.¹ Still less will the injustice of a constitutional provision authorize the courts to disregard it, or indirectly to annul it by construing it away. It is quite possible that the people may, under the influence of temporary prejudice, or a mistaken view of public policy, incorporate provisions in their charter of government, infringing upon the proper rights of individual citizens or upon principles which ought ever to be regarded as sacred and fundamental in republican government; and it is also possible that obnoxious classes may be unjustly disfranchised. The remedy for such injustice must be found in the action of the people themselves, through an amendment of their work when better counsels prevail. Such provisions, when free from doubt, must receive the same construction as any other. We do not say, however, that if a clause should be found in a constitution which should appear at first blush to demand a construction leading to monstrous and absurd consequences, it might not be the duty of the court to question and cross-question such clause closely, with a view to discover in it, if possible, some other meaning more consistent with the general purposes and aims of these instruments. When such a case arises, it will be time to consider it.²

Duty in Case of Doubt.

But when all the legitimate lights for ascertaining the meaning of the Constitution have been made use of, it may still happen that the construction remains a matter of doubt. In such a case it seems clear that every one called upon to act where, in

respect for the fundamental law is lost, and the powers of the government are just what those in authority please to call them." See also *Encking v. Simmons*, 28 Wis. 272. Whether there may not be circumstances under which the State can be held justly estopped from alleging the invalidity of its own action in apportioning the political divisions of the State, and imposing burdens on citizens, where such action has been ac-

quiesced in for a considerable period, and rights have been acquired through bearing the burdens under it, see *Ramsey v. People*, 19 N. Y. 41; *People v. Maynard*, 15 Mich. 470; *Kneeland v. Milwaukee*, 15 Wis. 454.

¹ See *post*, p. *171, and cases referred to in notes.

² *McMullen v. Hodge*, 5 Tex. 34. See *Clarke v. Irwin*, 5 Nev. 111; *Walker v. Cincinnati*, 21 Ohio, n. s. 14; *Bailey v. Commonwealth*, 11 Bush, 688.

his * opinion, the proposed action would be of doubtful [* 74] constitutionality, is bound upon the doubt alone to abstain from acting. Whoever derives power from the Constitution to perform any public function is disloyal to that instrument, and grossly derelict in duty, if he does that which he is not reasonably satisfied the Constitution permits. Whether the power be legislative, executive, or judicial, there is manifest disregard of constitutional and moral obligation by one who, having taken an oath to observe that instrument, takes part in an action which he cannot say he believes to be no violation of its provisions. A doubt of the constitutionality of any proposed legislative enactment should in any case be reason sufficient for refusing to adopt it; and, if legislators do not act upon this principle, the reasons upon which are based the judicial decisions sustaining legislation in very many cases will cease to be of force.

Directory and Mandatory Provisions.

The important question sometimes presents itself, whether we are authorized in any case, when the meaning of a clause of the Constitution is arrived at, to give it such practical construction as will leave it optional with the department or officer to which it is addressed to obey it or not as he shall see fit. In respect to statutes it has long been settled that particular provisions may be regarded as *directory* merely; by which is meant that they are to be considered as giving directions which *ought* to be followed, but not as so limiting the power in respect to which the directions are given that it cannot effectually be exercised without observing them. The force of many of the decisions on this subject will be readily assented to by all; while others are sometimes thought to go to the extent of nullifying the intent of the legislature in essential particulars. It is not our purpose to examine the several cases critically, or to attempt — what we deem impossible — to reconcile them all; but we shall content ourselves with quoting from a few, with a view, if practicable, to ascertaining some line of principle upon which they can be classified.

There are cases where, whether a statute was to be regarded as merely directory or not, was made to depend upon the employing or failing to employ negative words plainly importing that the act should be done in a particular manner or time, *and not*

[*75] *otherwise.¹ The use of such words is often very conclusive of an intent to impose a limitation; but their absence is by no means equally conclusive that the statute was not designed to be mandatory.² Lord *Mansfield* would have the question whether mandatory or not depend upon whether that which was directed to be done was or was not of the essence of the thing required.³ The Supreme Court of New York, in an opinion afterwards approved by the Court of Appeals, laid down the rule as one settled by authority, that "statutes directing the mode of proceeding by public officers are directory, and are not regarded as essential to the validity of the proceedings themselves, unless it be so declared in the statute."⁴ This rule strikes us as very general, and as likely to include within its scope, in many cases, things which are of the very essence of the proceeding. The questions in that case were questions of irregularity under election laws, not in any way hindering the complete expression of the will of the electors; and the court was doubtless right in holding that the election was not to be avoided for a failure in the officers appointed for its conduct to comply in all respects with the directions of the statute there in question. The same court in another case say: "Statutory requisitions are deemed directory only when they relate to some immaterial matter, where a compliance is a matter of convenience rather than of substance."⁵ The Supreme Court of Michigan, in a case involving the validity of proceedings on the

¹ *Slayton v. Hulings*, 7 Ind. 144; *King v. Inhabitants of St. Gregory*, 2 Ad. & El. 99; *King v. Inhabitants of Hipswell*, 8 B. & C. 466.

² *District Township v. Dubuque*, 7 Iowa, 284.

³ *Rex v. Locksdale*, 1 Burr. 447.

⁴ *People v. Cook*, 14 Barb. 290; s. c. 8 N. Y. 67.

⁵ *People v. Schermerhorn*, 19 Barb. 558. If a statute imposes a duty and gives the means of performing that duty, it must be held to be mandatory. *Veazie v. China*, 50 Me. 518. "It would not perhaps be easy to lay down any general rule as to when the provisions of a statute are merely directory, and when mandatory or imperative. Where the words are

affirmative, and relate to the manner in which power or jurisdiction vested in a public officer or body is to be exercised, and not to the limits of the power or jurisdiction itself, they may and often have been construed to be directory; but negative words, which go to the power or jurisdiction itself, have never, that I am aware of, been brought within that category. 'A clause is directory,' says *Taunton, J.*, 'when the provisions contain mere matters of direction and no more; but not so when they are followed by words of positive prohibition.' *Pearse v. Morrice*, 2 Ad. & El. 96." Per *Sharswood, J.*, in *Bladen v. Philadelphia*, 60 Penn. St. 464, 466. And see *Pittsburg v. Coursin*, 74 Penn. St. 400.

sale of land for taxes, laid down the rule that "what the law requires to be done for the protection of the tax-payer is mandatory, and cannot be regarded as directory merely."¹ A similar rule was recognized in a recent case in Illinois. Commissioners had been appointed to ascertain and assess the damage and recompense due to the owners of land which might be taken, on the real estate of the persons benefited by a certain local improvement, in proportion as nearly as might be to the benefits resulting to each. By the statute, when the assessment was completed, the commissioners were to sign and return the same to the * city [* 76] council within forty days of their appointment. This provision was not complied with, but return was made afterwards, and the question was raised as to its validity when thus made. In the opinion of the court, this question was to be decided by ascertaining whether any advantage would be lost, or right destroyed, or benefit sacrificed, either to the public or to any individual, by holding the provision directory. After remarking that they had held an assessment under the general revenue law, returned after the time appointed by law, as void, because the person assessed would lose the benefit of an appeal from the assessment,² they say of the statute before the court: "There are no negative words used declaring that the functions of the commissioners shall cease after the expiration of the forty days, or that they shall not make their return after that time; nor have we been able to discover the least right, benefit, or advantage which the property owner could derive from having the return made within that time, and not after. No time is limited and made dependent on that time, within which the owner of the property may apply to have the assessment reviewed or corrected. The next section requires the clerk to give ten days' notice that the assessment has been returned, specifying the day when objections may be made to the assessment before the common council by parties interested, which hearing may be adjourned from day to day; and the common council is empowered in its discretion to confirm or annul the assessment altogether, or to refer it back to

¹ Clark v. Crane, 5 Mich. 154. See also Shawnee County v. Carter, 2 Kan. 115. In Life Association v. Board of Assessors, 49 Mo. 512, it is held that a constitutional provision that "all property subject to taxation

ought to be taxed in proportion to its value" is a prohibition against its being taxed in any other mode, and the word *ought* is mandatory.

² Marsh v. Chestnut, 14 Ill. 223.

the same commissioners, or to others to be by them appointed. As the property owner has the same time and opportunity to prepare himself to object to the assessment and have it corrected, whether the return be made before or after the expiration of the forty days, the case differs from that of *Chestnut v. Marsh*,¹ at the very point on which that case turned. Nor is there any other portion of the chapter which we have discovered, bringing it within the principle of that case, which is the well-recognized rule in all the books.”²

The rule is nowhere more clearly stated than by Chief Justice *Shaw*, in *Torrey v. Milbury*,³ which was also a tax case. [* 77] “In * considering the various statutes regulating the assessment of taxes, and the measures preliminary thereto, it is not always easy to distinguish which are conditions precedent to the legality and validity of the tax, and which are directory merely, and do not constitute conditions. One rule is very plain and well settled, that all those measures that are intended for the security of the citizen, for insuring equality of taxation, and to enable every one to know with reasonable certainty for what polls and for what real estate he is taxed, and for what all those who are liable with him are taxed, are conditions precedent; and if they are not observed, he is not legally taxed; and he may resist it in any of the modes authorized by law for contesting the validity of the tax. But many regulations are made by statutes designed for the information of assessors and officers, and intended to promote

¹ 14 Ill. 223.

² *Wheeler v. Chicago*, 24 Ill. 108.

³ 21 Pick. 67. We commend in the same connection the views of *Lewis*, Ch. J., in *Corbett v. Bradley*, 7 Nev. 108: “When any requirement of a statute is held to be directory, and therefore not material to be followed, it is upon the assumption that the legislature itself so considered it, and did not make the right conferred dependent upon a compliance with the form prescribed for securing it. It is upon this principle that the courts often hold the time designated in a statute, where a thing is to be done, to be directory. No court certainly has the right to hold any requirement

of a law unnecessary to be complied with, unless it be manifest the legislature did not intend to impose the consequence which would naturally follow from a non-compliance, or which would result from holding the requirement mandatory or indispensable. If it be clear that no penalty was intended to be imposed for a non-compliance, then, as a matter of course, it is but carrying out the will of the legislature to declare the statute in that respect to be simply directory. But, if there be any thing to indicate the contrary, a full compliance with it must be enforced.” See also *Hartford v. Omaha*, 4 Neb. 336.

method, system, and uniformity in the modes of proceeding, a compliance or non-compliance with which does in no respect affect the rights of tax-paying citizens. These may be considered directory. Officers may be liable to legal animadversion, perhaps to punishment, for not observing them; but yet their observance is not a condition precedent to the validity of the tax."

We shall quote further only from a single other case upon this point. The Supreme Court of Wisconsin, in considering the validity of a statute not published within the time required by law, "understand the doctrine concerning directory statutes to be this: that where there is no substantial reason why the thing to be done might not as well be done after the time prescribed as before, no presumption that by allowing it to be so done it may work an injury or wrong, nothing in the act itself, or in other acts relating to the same subject-matter, indicating that the legislature did not intend that it should rather be done after the time prescribed than not to be done at all, there the courts assume that the intent was, that if not done within the time prescribed it might be done afterwards. But when any of these reasons intervene, then the limit is established."¹

These cases perhaps sufficiently indicate the rules, so far as any of general application can be declared, which are to be made use of in determining whether the provisions of a statute are mandatory or directory. Those directions which are not of the essence of the thing to be done, but which are given with a view merely * to the proper, orderly, and prompt conduct of the busi- [* 78] ness, and by a failure to obey which the rights of those interested will not be prejudiced, are not commonly to be regarded as mandatory; and if the act is performed, but not in the time or in the precise mode indicated, it may still be sufficient, if that which is done accomplishes the substantial purpose of the statute.²

¹ *State v. Lean*, 9 Wis. 292. See further, for the views of this court on the subject here discussed, *Wendel v. Durbin*, 26 Wis. 390. The general doctrine of the cases above quoted is approved and followed in *French v. Edwards*, 13 Wall. 506. In *Low v. Dunham*, 61 Me. 566, a statute is said to be mandatory where public interests

or rights are concerned, and the public or third persons have a claim *de jure* that the power shall be exercised. And see *Wiley v. Flournoy*, 30 Ark. 609.

² The following, in addition to those cited, are some of the cases in this country in which statutes have been declared directory only: *Pond v.*

But this rule presupposes that no negative words are employed in the statute which expressly or by necessary implication forbid the doing of the act at any other time or in any other manner than as directed. Even as thus laid down and restricted, the doctrine is one to be applied with much circumspection; for it is not to be denied that the courts have sometimes, in their anxiety to sustain the proceedings of careless or incompetent officers, gone very far in substituting a judicial view of what was essential for that declared by the legislature.¹

But the courts tread upon very dangerous ground when they venture to apply the rules which distinguish directory and mandatory statutes to the provisions of a constitution. Constitutions do not usually undertake to prescribe mere rules of proceeding, except when such rules are looked upon as essential to the thing to be done; and they must then be regarded in the light of limitations upon the power to be exercised. It is the province of an instrument of this solemn and permanent character to establish those fundamental maxims, and fix those unvarying rules, [* 79] by which all * departments of the government must at all times shape their conduct; and if it descends to prescrib-

Negus, 3 Mass. 230; Williams v. School District, 21 Pick. 75; City of Lowell v. Hadley, 8 Met. 180; Holland v. Osgood, 8 Vt. 280; Corliss v. Corliss, 8 Vt. 373; People v. Allen, 6 Wend. 486; Marchant v. Langworthy, 6 Hill, 646; *Ex parte* Heath, 3 Hill, 43; People v. Holley, 12 Wend. 481; Jackson v. Young, 5 Cow. 269; Striker v. Kelley, 7 Hill, 9; People v. Peck, 11 Wend. 604; Matter of Mohawk and Hudson Railroad Co., 19 Wend. 143; People v. Runkel, 9 Johns. 147; Gale v. Mead, 2 Denio, 160; Doughty v. Hope, 3 Denio, 252; Elmendorf v. Mayor, &c. of New York, 25 Wend. 696; Thames Manufacturing Co. v. Lathrop, 7 Conn. 550; Colt v. Eves, 12 Conn. 243; People v. Doe, 1 Mich. 451; Parks v. Goodwin, 1 Doug. (Mich.) 56; Hickey v. Hinsdale, 8 Mich. 267; People v. Hartwell, 12 Mich. 508; State v. McGinley, 4 Ind. 7; Slayton v. Hulings, 7 Ind.

144; New Orleans v. St. Rows, 9 La. An. 573; Edwards v. James, 13 Tex. 52; State v. Click, 2 Ala. 26; Savage v. Walshe, 26 Ala. 620; Sorchan v. Brooklyn, 62 N. Y. 339; People v. Tompkins, 64 N. Y. 53; Limestone Co. v. Rather, 48 Ala. 433; Webster v. French, 12 Ill. 302; McKim v. Weller, 11 Cal. 47; State v. Co. Commissioners of Baltimore, 29 Md. 516; Fry v. Booth, 19 Ohio, n. s. 25; Whalin v. Macomb, 76 Ill. 49; Hurford v. Omaha, 4 Neb. 336; Lackawana Iron Co. v. Little Wolf, 38 Wis. 152; Green v. Warren Co., 10 Bush, 711; Grant v. Spencer, 1 Montana, 136. The list might easily be largely increased.

¹ See upon this subject the remarks of Mr. Sedgwick in his work on Statutory and Constitutional Law, p. 375, and those of Hubbard, J., in Briggs v. Georgia, 15 Vt. 72. Also see Dryfuss v. Dridges, 45 Miss. 247.

ing mere rules of order in unessential matters, it is lowering the proper dignity of such an instrument, and usurping the proper province of ordinary legislation. We are not therefore to expect to find in a constitution provisions which the people, in adopting it, have not regarded as of high importance, and worthy to be embraced in an instrument which, for a time at least, is to control alike the government and the governed, and to form a standard by which is to be measured the power which can be exercised as well by the delegate as by the sovereign people themselves. If directions are given respecting the times or modes of proceeding in which a power should be exercised, there is at least a strong presumption that the people designed it should be exercised in that time and mode only ;¹ and we impute to the people a want of due appreciation of the purpose and proper province of such an instrument, when we infer that such directions are given to any other end. Especially when, as has been already said, it is but fair to presume that the people in their constitution have expressed themselves in careful and measured terms, corresponding with the immense importance of the powers delegated, and with a view to leave as little as possible to implication.²

There are some cases, however, where the doctrine of directory statutes has been applied to constitutional provisions ; but they are so plainly at variance with the weight of authority upon the precise points considered that we feel warranted in saying that the judicial decisions as they now stand do not sanction the application. In delivering the opinion of the New York Court of Appeals in one case, Mr. Justice *Willard* had occasion to consider the constitutional provision, that on the final passage of a bill the question shall be taken by ayes and noes, which shall be duly entered upon the journals ; and he expressed the opinion that it was only directory to the legislature.³ The remark was *obiter*

¹ See *State v. Johnson*, 26 Ark. 281.

² *Wolcott v. Wigton*, 7 Ind. 49; per *Bronson, J.*, in *People v. Purdy*, 2 Hill, 36; *Greencastle Township v. Black*, 5 Ind. 566; *Opinions of Judges*, 6 Shep. 458. See *People v. Lawrence*, 36 Barb. 177; *State v. Johnson*, 26 Ark. 281. "The essential nature and object of constitutional

law being restrictive upon the powers of the several departments of government, it is difficult to comprehend how its provisions can be regarded as merely directory." *Nicholson, Ch. J.*, in *Cannon v. Mathes*, 8 Heisk. 504, 517.

³ *People v. Supervisors of Chango*, 8 N. Y. 328.

dictum, as the court had already decided that the provision had been fully complied with ; and those familiar with the reasons which have induced the insertion of this clause in our [* 80] * constitutions will not readily concede that its sole design was to establish a mere rule of order for legislative proceedings, which might be followed or not at discretion. Mr. Chief Justice *Thurman*, of Ohio, in a case not calling for a discussion of the subject, has considered a statute whose validity was assailed on the ground that it was not passed in the mode prescribed by the constitution. “ By the term *mode*,” he says, “ I do not mean to include the *authority* in which the law-making power resides, or the number of votes a bill must receive to become a law. That the power to make laws is vested in the assembly alone, and that no act has any force that was not passed by the number of votes required by the constitution, are nearly, or quite, self-evident propositions. These essentials relate to the authority by which, rather than the mode in which, laws are to be made. Now to secure the careful exercise of this power, and for other good reasons, the constitution prescribes or recognizes certain things to be done in the enactment of laws, which things form a course or mode of legislative procedure. Thus we find, *inter alia*, the provision that every bill shall be fully and distinctly read on three different days, unless, in case of urgency, three-fourths of the house in which it shall be pending shall dispense with this rule. This is an important provision without doubt, but, nevertheless, there is much reason for saying that it is merely directory in its character, and that its observance by the assembly is secured by their sense of duty and official oaths, and not by any supervisory power of the courts. Any other construction, we incline to think, would lead to very absurd and alarming consequences. If it is in the power of every court (and if one has the power, every one has it) to inquire whether a bill that passed the assembly was ‘ fully ’ and ‘ distinctly ’ read three times in each house, and to hold it invalid if, upon any reading, a word was accidentally omitted, or the reading was indistinct, it would obviously be impossible to know what is the statute law of the State. Now the requisition that bills shall be fully and distinctly read is just as imperative as that requiring them to be read three times ; and as both relate to the mode of procedure merely, it would be difficult to find any sufficient reason why a violation of one of

them would be less fatal to an act than a violation of the other.”¹

A requirement that a law shall be read *distinctly*, whether * mandatory or directory, is, from the very nature of the case, addressed to the judgment of the legislative body, whose decision as to what reading is sufficiently distinct to be a compliance cannot be subject to review. But in the absence of authority to the contrary, we should not have supposed that the requirement of three successive readings on different days stood upon the same footing.² To this extent a definite and certain rule is capable of being, and has been, laid down, which can be literally obeyed; and the legislative body cannot suppose or adjudge it to have been done if the fact is otherwise. The requirement has an important purpose, in making legislators proceed in their action with caution and deliberation; and there cannot often be difficulty in ascertaining from the legislative records themselves if the constitution has been violated in this particular. There is, therefore, no inherent difficulty in the question being reached and passed upon by the courts in the ordinary mode, if it is decided that the constitution intends legislation shall be reached through the three readings, and not otherwise.

The opinion above quoted was recognized as law by the Supreme Court of Ohio in a case soon after decided. In that case the court proceed to say: “The . . . provision . . . that no bill shall contain more than one subject, which shall be clearly expressed in its title, is also made a permanent rule in the introduction and passage of bills through the houses. The subject of the bill is required to be clearly expressed in the title for the purpose of advising members of its subject, when voting in cases in which the reading has been dispensed with by a two-thirds vote. The provision that a bill shall contain but one subject was to prevent combinations by which various and distinct matters of legislation should gain a support which they could not if presented separately.

¹ Miller v. State, 3 Ohio, N. S. 483. The provision for three readings on separate days does not apply to amendments made in the progress of the bill through the houses. People v. Wallace, 70 Ill. 680.

² See People v. Campbell, 3 Gilm. 466; McCulloch v. State, 11 Ind. 432; Cannon v. Mathes, 8 Heisk. 504; Spangler v. Jacoby, 14 Ill. 297; People v. Starne, 35 Ill. 121; Ryan v. Lynch, 68 Ill. 160.

As a rule of proceeding in the General Assembly, it is manifestly an important one. But if it was intended to effect any practical object for the benefit of the people in the examination, construction, or operation of acts passed and published, we are unable to perceive it. The title of an act may indicate to the reader its subject, and under the rule each act would contain one subject. To suppose that for such a purpose the Constitutional Convention adopted the rule under consideration, would impute to them a most minute provision for a very imperfect heading of the [* 82] chapters of laws and their subdivision. This * provision being intended to operate upon bills in their progress through the General Assembly, it must be held to be directory only. It relates to bills, and not to acts. It would be most mischievous in practice to make the validity of every law depend upon the judgment of every judicial tribunal of the State, as to whether an act or a bill contained more than one subject, or whether this one subject was clearly expressed in the title of the act or bill. Such a question would be decided according to the mental precision and mental discipline of each justice of the peace and judge. No practical benefit could arise from such inquiries. We are therefore of opinion that in general the only safeguard against the violation of these rules of the houses is their regard for, and their oath to support, the constitution of the State. We say, *in general*, the only safeguard; for whether a manifestly gross and fraudulent violation of these rules might authorize the court to pronounce a law unconstitutional, it is unnecessary to determine. It is to be presumed no such case will ever occur.”¹

¹ Pim v. Nicholson, 6 Ohio, N. S. 179. See also the case of Washington v. Murray, 4 Cal. 388, for similar views. In Hill v. Boyland, 40 Miss. 618, a provision requiring of all officers an oath to support the constitution, was held not to invalidate the acts of officials who had neglected to take such an oath. And in McPherson v. Leonard, 29 Md. 377, the provision that the style of all laws shall be, “Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland,” was held directory. Similar rulings were made in Cape Girardeau v. Riley, 52 Mo. 424; St. Louis v. Foster, 52 Mo. 513; Swann v. Buck, 40 Miss. 268.

Directly the opposite has been held in Nevada. State v. Rogers, 10 Nev. 250. So a requirement that indictments shall conclude “against the peace and dignity of the people of West Virginia,” was held in Lemons v. People, 4 W. Va. 755, s. c. 1 Green Cr. R. 666, to be mandatory, and an indictment which complied with it, except in abbreviating the name of the State, was held bad.

A statute which is passed in obedience to a constitutional requirement must be held mandatory. State v. Pierce, 35 Wis. 93, 99.

If the prevailing doctrine of the courts were in accord with this decision, it might become important to consider whether the object of the clause in question, as here disclosed, was not of such a character as to make the provision mandatory even in a statute. But we shall not enter upon that subject here, as elsewhere we shall have occasion to refer to decisions made by the highest judicial tribunals in nearly all of the States, recognizing similar provisions as mandatory, and to be enforced by the courts. And we concur fully in what was said by Mr. Justice *Emmot* in speaking of this very provision, that "it will be found upon full consideration to be difficult to treat any constitutional provision as merely directory and not imperative."¹ And with what is said by Mr. Justice *Lumpkin*, as to the duty of the courts: "It has been suggested that the prohibition in the seventeenth section of the first article of the constitution, 'Nor shall any law or ordinance pass containing any matter different from what is expressed in the title thereof,' is directory only to the legislative and executive or law-making departments of the government. But we do not so understand it. On the contrary, we consider it as much a * matter of judicial cognizance as any other pro- [* 83] vision in that instrument. If the courts would refuse to execute a law suspending the writ of *habeas corpus* when the public safety did not require it, a law violatory of the freedom of the press, or trial by jury, neither would they enforce a statute which contained matter different from what was expressed in the title thereof."²

Self-executing Provisions.

But although all the provisions of a constitution are to be regarded as mandatory, there are some which, from the nature of the case, are as incapable of compulsory enforcement as are directory provisions in general. The reason is that, while the purpose may be to establish rights or to impose duties, they do not in and of themselves constitute a sufficient rule by means of which such right may be protected or such duty enforced. In such cases,

¹ *People v. Lawrence*, 36 Barb. 186. 7 Ind. 683; *People v. Starne*, 35 Ill.

² *Prothro v. Orr*, 12 Geo. 36. See 121; *State v. Miller*, 45 Mo. 495; also *Opinions of Judges*, 18 Me. 458; *Weaver v. Lapsley*, 43 Ala. 224; *Indiana Central Railroad Co. v. Potts*, *Nougues v. Douglass*, 7 Cal. 65.

before the constitutional provision can be made effectual, supplemental legislation must be had ; and the provision is in its nature mandatory to the legislature to enact the needful legislation, though back of it there lies no authority to enforce the command. Sometimes the constitution in terms requires the legislature to enact laws on a particular subject ; and here it is obvious that the requirement has only a moral force : the legislature ought to obey it ; but the right intended to be given is only assured when the legislation is voluntarily enacted. Illustrations may be found in constitutional provisions requiring the legislature to provide by law uniform and just rules for the assessment and collection of taxes ; these must lie dormant until the legislation is had ;¹ they do not displace the law previously in force, though the purpose may be manifest to do away with it by the legislation required.² So, however plainly the constitution may recognize the right to appropriate private property for the general benefit, the appropriation cannot be made until the law has pointed out the cases, and given the means by which compensation may be assured.³ A different illustration is afforded by the new amendments to the federal Constitution. Thus, the fifteenth amendment provides that "the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States, or by any State, on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." To this extent it is self-executing, and of its own force it abolishes all distinctions in suffrage based on the particulars enumerated. But when it further provides that "Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation," it indicates the possibility that the rule may not be found sufficiently comprehensive or particular to protect fully this right to equal suffrage, and that legislation may be found necessary for that purpose.⁴ Other provisions are fully self-executing, and

¹ *Williams v. Detroit*, 2 Mich. 560; *People v. Lake Co.*, 33 Cal. 487; *Bowie v. Lott*, 24 La. Ann. 214.

² *Moore, J.*, in *Supervisors of Doddridge v. Stout*, 9 W. Va. 703, 705; *Cahoon v. Commonwealth*, 20 Gratt 733; *Lehigh Iron Co. v. Lower Macungie*, 81 Penn. St. 482.

³ *Lamb v. Lane*, 4 Ohio, N. S. 167. See *St. Joseph School Board v.*

Buchanan County, 62 Mo. 444; *Myers v. English*, 9 Cal. 341; *Gillenwater v. Mississippi, &c. R. R. Co.*, 13 Ill. 1.

⁴ *United States v. Reese*, 92 U. S. Rep. 214. Any constitutional provision is self-executing to this extent, that every thing done in violation of it is void. *Brien v. Williamson*, 8 Miss. 14.

manifestly contemplate no legislation whatever to give them full force and operation.¹

A constitutional provision may be said to be self-executing if it supplies a sufficient rule by means of which the right given may be enjoyed and protected, or the duty imposed may be enforced; and it is not self-executing when it merely indicates principles, without laying down rules by means of which those principles may be given the force of law. Thus, a constitution may very clearly require county and town government; but if it fails to indicate its range, and to provide proper machinery, it is not in this particular self-executing, and legislation is essential.² Rights in such a case may lie dormant until statutes shall provide for them, though, in so far as any distinct provision is made which by itself is capable of enforcement, it is law, and all supplementary legislation must be in harmony with it.

The provisions exempting homesteads from forced sale for the satisfaction of debts furnish many illustrations of self-executing provisions, and also of those which are not self-executing. Where, as in California, the constitution declares that "the legislature shall protect by law from forced sale a certain portion of the homestead and other property of all heads of families," the dependence of the provision on subsequent legislative action is manifest. But where, as in some other States, the constitution defines the extent, in acres or amount, that shall be deemed to constitute a homestead, and expressly exempts from any forced sale what is thus defined, a rule is prescribed which is capable of enforcement. Perhaps even in such cases legislation may be desirable, by way of providing convenient remedies for the protection of the right secured, or of regulating the claim of the right so that its exact limits may be known and understood; but all such legislation must be subordinate to the constitutional provision and in furtherance of its purpose, and must not in any particular attempt to narrow or embarrass it. The provision of a constitution which defines a homestead and exempts it from

¹ See *People v. Bradley*, 60 Ill. 390; *People v. McRoberts*, 62 Ill. 38; *Mitchell v. Illinois, &c. Coal Co.*, 68 Ill. 286; *Beecher v. Baldy*, 7 Mich. 488; *People v. Rumsey*, 64 Ill. 41.

² Wall, *Ex parte*, 48 Cal. 279; *Attorney-General v. Common Council of Detroit*, 29 Mich. 108.

forced sale is self-executing, at least to this extent, that, though it may admit of supplementary legislation in particulars where in itself it is not as complete as may be desirable, it will override and nullify whatever legislation, either prior or subsequent, would defeat or limit the homestead which is thus defined and secured.

We have thus indicated some of the rules which we think are to be observed in the construction of constitutions. It will be perceived that we have not thought it important to quote and to dwell upon those arbitrary rules to which so much attention is sometimes given, and which savor rather of the closet than of practical life. Our observation would lead us to the conclusion that they are more often resorted to as aids in ingenious attempts to make the constitution seem to say what it does not, than with a view to make that instrument express its real intent. All external aids, and especially all arbitrary rules, applied to instruments of this popular character, are of very uncertain value; and we do not regard it as out of place to repeat here what we have had occasion already to say in the course of this chapter, that they are to be made use of with hesitation, and only with much circumspection.¹

¹ See *People v. Cowles*, 13 N. Y. 360, per *Johnson, J.*; *Temple v. Mead*, 4 Vt. 540, per *Williams, J.*; *People v. Fancher*, 50 N. Y. 291. "In construing so important an instrument as a constitution, especially those parts which affect the vital principle of republican government, the elective franchise, or the manner of exercising it, we are not, on the one hand, to indulge ingenious speculations which may lead us wide from the true sense and spirit of the instrument, nor, on the other, to apply to it such narrow and constrained views as may exclude the real object and intent of those who framed it. We are to suppose that the authors of such an instrument had a thorough knowledge of the force and extent of the words they employ; that they had a beneficial end and purpose in view; and that, more especially in any appar-

ent restriction upon the mode of exercising the right of suffrage, there was some existing or anticipated evil which it was their purpose to avoid. If an enlarged sense of any particular form of expression should be necessary to accomplish so great an object as a convenient exercise of the fundamental privilege or right, — that of election, — such sense must be attributed. We are to suppose that those who were delegated to the great business of distributing the powers which emanated from the sovereignty of the people, and to the establishment of the rules for the perpetual security of the rights of person and property, had the wisdom to adapt their language to future as well as existing emergencies, so that words competent to the then existing state of the community, and at the same time capable of being expanded to

embrace more extensive relations, should not be restrained to their more obvious and immediate sense, if, consistently with the general object of the authors and the true principles of the compact, they can be extended to other relations and circumstances which an improved state of society may produce. *Qui hæret in litera*

hæret in cortice is a familiar maxim of the law. The letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive, is the more forcible expression of Scripture." *Parker*, Ch. J., in *Henshaw v. Foster*, 9 Pick. 316. There are some very pertinent and forcible remarks by Mr. Justice *Müller* on this general subject in *Woodson v. Murdock*, 22 Wall. 351, 381.

[* 85]

* CHAPTER V.

OF THE POWERS WHICH THE LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT MAY EXERCISE.

IN considering the powers which may be exercised by the legislative department of one of the American States, it is natural that we should recur to those possessed by the Parliament of Great Britain, after which, in a measure, the American legislatures have been modelled, and from which we derive our legislative usages and customs, or parliamentary common law, as well as the precedents by which the exercise of legislative power in this country has been governed. It is natural, also, that we should incline to measure the power of the legislative department in America by the power of the like department in Britain; and to concede without reflection that whatever the legislature of the country from which we derive our laws can do, may also be done by the department created for the exercise of legislative authority in this country. But to guard against being misled by a comparison between the two, we must bear in mind the important distinction already pointed out, that with the Parliament rests practically the sovereignty of the country, so that it may exercise all the powers of the government if it wills so to do; while on the other hand the legislatures of the American States are not the sovereign authority, and, though vested with the exercise of one branch of the sovereignty, they are nevertheless, in wielding it, hedged in on all sides by important limitations, some of which are imposed in express terms, and others by implications which are equally imperative.

“The power and jurisdiction of Parliament, says Sir *Edward Coke*,¹ is so transcendent and absolute, that it cannot be confined, either for persons or causes, within any bounds. And of this high court it may truly be said: ‘*Si antiquitatem spectes,*

¹ 4 Inst. 36.

est vetustissima; si dignitatem, est honoratissima; si jurisdictionem, est capacissima.' It hath sovereign and uncontrolled authority in the making, confirming, enlarging, restraining, abrogating, repealing, reviving, and expounding of laws, concerning matters of all possible denominations, ecclesiastical or temporal, *civil, military, maritime, or criminal; this [* 86] being the place where that absolute despotic power, which must in all governments reside somewhere, is intrusted by the constitution of these kingdoms. All mischief and grievances, operations and remedies, that transcend the ordinary course of the laws, are within the reach of this extraordinary tribunal. It can regulate or new-model the succession to the Crown, as was done in the reign of Henry VIII. and William III. It can alter the established religion of the land; as was done in a variety of instances, in the reign of King Henry VIII. and his three children. It can change and create afresh even the constitution of the kingdom and of Parliaments themselves, as was done by the Act of Union, and the several statutes for triennial and septennial elections. It can, in short, do every thing that is not naturally impossible; and therefore some have not scrupled to call its power, by a figure rather too bold, the omnipotence of Parliament. True it is, that what the Parliament doth, no authority upon earth can undo; so that it is a matter most essential to the liberties of this kingdom that such members be delegated to this important trust as are most eminent for their probity, their fortitude, and their knowledge; for it was a known apothegm of the great Lord Treasurer, Burleigh, 'that England could never be ruined but by a Parliament;' and as Sir *Matthew Hale* observes: 'This being the highest and greatest court, over which none other can have jurisdiction in the kingdom, if by any means a misgovernment should fall upon it, the subjects of this kingdom are left without all manner of remedy.' " ¹

The strong language in which the complete jurisdiction of Parliament is here described is certainly inapplicable to any authority in the American States, unless it be to the people of the States when met in their primary capacity for the formation of their fundamental law; and even then there rest upon them

¹ 1 Bl. Com. 160. See Austin on power is unknown. Loan Association Jurisprudence, Lec. 6. In the American system such a thing as unlimited v. Topeka, 20 Wall. 663.

the restraints of the Constitution of the United States, which bind them as absolutely as they do the governments which they create. It becomes important, therefore, to ascertain in what respect the State legislatures resemble the Parliament in the powers they exercise, and how far we may extend the comparison without losing sight of the fundamental ideas and principles of the American system.

[* 87] * The first and most notable difference is that to which we have already alluded, and which springs from the different theory on which the British Constitution rests. So long as the Parliament is recognized as rightfully exercising the sovereign authority of the country, it is evident that the resemblance between it and American legislatures in regard to their ultimate powers cannot be traced very far. The American legislatures only exercise a certain portion of the sovereign power. The sovereignty is in the people; and the legislatures which they have created are only to discharge a trust of which they have been made a depository, but which has been placed in their hands with well-defined restrictions.

Upon this difference it is to be observed, that while Parliament, to any extent it may choose, may exercise judicial authority, one of the most noticeable features in American constitutional law is the care which has been taken to separate legislative, executive, and judicial functions. It has evidently been the intention of the people in every State that the exercise of each should rest with a separate department. The different classes of power have been apportioned to different departments; and as all derive their authority from the same instrument, there is an implied exclusion of each department from exercising the functions conferred upon the others.

There are two fundamental rules by which we may measure the extent of the legislative authority in the States: —

1. In creating a legislative department and conferring upon it the legislative power, the people must be understood to have conferred the full and complete power as it rests in, and may be exercised by, the sovereign power of any country, subject only to such restrictions as they may have seen fit to impose, and to the limitations which are contained in the Constitution of the United States. The legislative department is not made a special agency, for the exercise of specifically defined legislative

powers, but is intrusted with the general authority to make laws at discretion.

2. But the apportionment to this department of legislative power does not sanction the exercise of executive or judicial functions, except in those cases, warranted by parliamentary usage, where they are incidental, necessary, or proper to the exercise of legislative authority, or where the constitution itself, in specified cases, may expressly permit it.¹ Executive power is so intimately connected with legislative, that it is not easy to draw a line of separation; but the grant of the judicial power to the department * created for the purpose of exercising it must [* 88] be regarded as an exclusive grant, covering the whole power, subject only to the limitations which the constitutions impose, and to the incidental exceptions before referred to.² While, therefore, the American legislatures may exercise the legislative powers which the Parliament of Great Britain wields, except as restrictions are imposed, they are at the same time excluded from other functions which may be, and sometimes habitually are, exercised by the Parliament.

“The people in framing the constitution,” says *Denio*, Ch. J., “committed to the legislature the whole law-making power of the State, which they did not expressly or impliedly withhold. Plenary power in the legislature, for all purposes of civil government, is the rule. A prohibition to exercise a particular power is an exception. In inquiring, therefore, whether a given statute is constitutional, it is for those who question its validity to show that it is forbidden. I do not mean that the power must be expressly inhibited, for there are but few positive restraints upon the legislative power contained in the instrument. The first article lays down the ancient limitations which have always been considered essential in a constitutional government, whether monarchical or popular; and there are scattered through the instrument a few other provisions in restraint of legislative authority. But the affirmative prescriptions and the general arrangements of the constitution are far more fruitful of restraints upon the legislature. Every positive direction contains an implication against every thing contrary to it, or which would frustrate or disappoint the purpose of that provision. The frame of the government, the grant of legislative power itself, the organization of the executive

¹ See *post*, pp. *87 to *114, *372.

² See *post*, p. *90, note.

authority, the erection of the principal courts of justice, create implied limitations upon the law-making authority as strong as though a negative was expressed in each instance; but independently of these restraints, express or implied, every subject within the scope of civil government is liable to be dealt with by the legislature.”¹

“It has never been questioned, so far as I know,” says *Redfield*, Ch. J., “that the American legislatures have the same unlimited power in regard to legislation which resides in the British Parliament, except where they are restrained by written constitutions. [* 89] That must be conceded, I think, to be a fundamental principle in the political organization of the American States. We cannot well comprehend how, upon principle, it should be otherwise. The people must, of course, possess all legislative power originally. They have committed this in the most general and unlimited manner to the several State legislatures, saving only such restrictions as are imposed by the Constitution of the United States, or of the particular State in question.”²

“I entertain no doubt,” says *Comstock*, J., “that aside from the special limitations of the constitution, the legislature cannot exercise powers which are in their nature essentially judicial or executive. These are, by the constitution, distributed to other departments of the government. It is only the ‘legislative power’ which is vested in the senate and assembly. But where the constitution is silent, and there is no clear usurpation of the powers distributed to other departments, I think there would be great difficulty and great danger in attempting to define the limits of this power. Chief Justice *Marshall* said: ‘How far the power of giving the law may involve every other power, in cases where the constitution is silent, never has been, and perhaps never can be, definitely stated.’³ That very eminent judge felt the difficulty;

¹ *People v. Draper*, 15 N. Y. 543.

² *Thorpe v. Rutland & Burlington Railroad Co.*, 27 Vt. 142. See also *Leggett v. Hunter*, 19 N. Y. 445; *Cochran v. Van Surlay*, 20 Wend. 365; *People v. Morrell*, 21 Wend. 563; *Sears v. Cottrell*, 5 Mich. 251; *Beachamp v. State*, 6 Blackf. 299; *Mason v. Wait*, 4 Scam. 134; *People v. Su-*

pervisors of Orange, 27 Barb. 593; *Taylor v. Porter*, 4 Hill, 144, per *Bronson*, J.; *Andrews v. State*, 3 Heisk. 165; *Lewis's Appeal*, 67 Penn. St. 153; *Walker v. Cincinnati*, 21 Ohio, N. S. 14; *People v. Wright*, 70 Ill. 388.

³ *Fletcher v. Peck*, 6 Cranch, 136.

but the danger was less apparent then than it is now, when theories, alleged to be founded in natural reason or inalienable rights, but subversive of the just and necessary powers of government, attract the belief of considerable classes of men, and when too much reverence for government and law is certainly among the least of the perils to which our institutions are exposed. I am reluctant to enter upon this field of inquiry, satisfied, as I am, that no rule can be laid down in terms which may not contain the germ of great mischief to society, by giving to private opinion and speculation a license to oppose themselves to the just and legitimate powers of government.”¹

Other judicial opinions in great number might be cited in support of the same general doctrine ; but as there will be * occasion to refer to them elsewhere when the circumstances under which a statute may be declared unconstitutional are considered, we shall refrain from further references in this place.² Nor shall we enter upon a discussion of the question suggested by Chief Justice *Marshall* as above quoted ;³ since, however interesting it may be as an abstract question, it is made practically unimportant by the careful separation of duties between the several departments of the government which has been made by each of the State constitutions. Had no such separation been made, the disposal of executive and judicial duties must have devolved upon the department vested with the general authority

¹ *Wynehamer v. People*, 13 N. Y. 391.

² See *post*, p. * 168, and cases cited in notes.

³ The power to distribute the judicial power, except so far as that has been done by the constitution, rests with the legislature : *Commonwealth v. Hipple*, 69 Penn. St. 9 ; but when the constitution has conferred it upon certain specified courts, this must be understood to embrace the whole judicial power, and the legislature cannot vest any portion of it elsewhere. *Greenough v. Greenough*, 11 Penn. St. 489 ; *State v. Maynard*, 14 Ill. 420 ; *Gibson v. Emerson*, 2 Eng. 173 ; *Chandler v. Nash*, 5 Mich. 409 ; *Succession of Tanner*, 22 La. Ann. 91 ;

Gough v. Dorsey, 27 Wis. 130 ; *Van Slyke v. Ins. Co.*, 39 Wis. 390 ; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 50 ; *Alexander v. Bennett*, 60 N. Y. 204 ; *People v. Young*, 72 Ill. 411. But a general provision in the constitution for the distribution of the judicial power, not referring to courts-martial, would not be held to forbid such courts by implication. *People v. Daniel*, 50 N. Y. 274. Nor would it be held to embrace administrative functions of a *quasi* judicial nature, such as the assessment of property for taxation. *State v. Commissioners of Ormsby County*, 7 Nev. 392, and cases cited. See *Auditor of State v. Atchison, &c. R. R. Co.*, 6 Kan. 500 ; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 575.

to make laws ;¹ but assuming them to be apportioned already, we are only at liberty to liken the power of the State legislature to that of the Parliament, when it confines its action to an exercise of legislative functions ; and such authority as is in its nature either executive or judicial is beyond its constitutional powers, with the few exceptions to which we have already referred.

It will be important therefore to consider those cases where legislation has been questioned as encroaching upon judicial authority ; and to this end it may be useful, at the outset, to endeavor to define legislative and judicial power respectively, that we may the better be enabled to point out the proper line of distinction when questions arise in their practical application to actual cases.

The legislative power we understand to be the authority, under the constitution, to make laws, and to alter and repeal them. Laws, in the sense in which the word is here employed, are rules of civil conduct, or statutes, which the legislative will has prescribed. "The laws of a State," observes Mr. Justice *Story*, "are more usually understood to mean the rules and enactments promulgated by the legislative authority thereof, or long-
[* 91] established local customs having *the force of laws."²

"The difference between the departments undoubtedly is, that the legislature makes, the executive executes, and the judiciary construes, the law."³ And it is said that that which distinguishes a judicial from a legislative act is, that the one is a determination of what the existing law is in relation to some existing thing already done or happened, while the other is a predetermination of what the law shall be for the regulation of all future cases falling under its provisions.⁴ And in another case it is said : "The legislative power extends only to the making of laws, and in its exercise it is limited and restrained by the paramount authority of the federal and State constitutions. It cannot directly reach the property or vested rights of the citizen by providing for their forfeiture or transfer to another,

¹ *Calder v. Bull*, 2 Root, 350, and 3 Dall. 386 ; *Ross v. Whitman*, 6 Cal. 361 ; *Smith v. Judge*, 17 Cal. 547 ; per *Patterson, J.*, in *Cooper v. Tel-fair*, 4 Dall. 19 ; *Martin v. Hunter's Lessee*, 1 Wheat. 304.

² *Swift v. Tyson*, 16 Pet. 18.

³ Per *Marshall, Ch. J.*, in *Wayman v. Southard*, 10 Wheat. 46 ; per *Gibson, Ch. J.*, in *Greenough v. Greenough*, 11 Penn. St. 494. See *State v. Gleason*, 12 Fla. 190 ; *Hawkins v. Governor*, 1 Ark. 570.

⁴ *Bates v. Kimball*, 2 Chip. 77.

without trial and judgment in the courts; for to do so would be the exercise of a power which belongs to another branch of the government, and is forbidden to the legislative.”¹ “That is not legislation which adjudicates in a particular case, prescribes the rule contrary to the general law, and orders it to be enforced. Such power assimilates itself more closely to despotic rule than any other attribute of government.”²

On the other hand, to adjudicate upon, and protect, the rights and interests of individual citizens, and to that end to construe and apply the laws, is the peculiar province of the judicial department.³ “No particular definition of judicial power,” says *Woodbury, J.*, “is given in the constitution [of New Hampshire], and, considering the general nature of the instrument, none was to be expected. Critical statements of the meanings in which all important words were employed would have swollen into volumes; and when those words possessed a customary signification, a definition of them would have been useless. But ‘powers judicial,’ * ‘judiciary powers,’ and ‘judicatures’ are all [* 92] phrases used in the constitution; and though not particularly defined, are still so used to designate with clearness that department of government which it was intended should interpret and administer the laws. On general principles, therefore, those inquiries, deliberations, orders, and decrees, which are peculiar to such a department, must in their nature be judicial acts. Nor can they be both judicial and legislative; because a marked difference exists between the employment of judicial and legislative tribunals. The former decide upon the legality of claims and conduct, and the latter make rules upon which, in connection with the constitution, those decisions should be founded. It is the province of judges to determine what is the law upon existing cases. In fine, the law is *applied* by the one, and *made* by the other. To do the first, therefore, — to compare the claims of parties with the law of the land before established, — is in its

¹ *Newland v. Marsh*, 19 Ill. 382.

² *Ervine's Appeal*, 16 Penn. St. 466. See also *Greenough v. Greenough*, 11 Penn. St. 494; *Dechasseaux v. Fairchild*, 15 Penn. St. 18; *Trustees, &c. v. Bailey*, 10 Fla. 238.

³ *Cincinnati, &c. Railroad Co. v. Commissioners of Clinton Co.*, 1 Ohio,

N. S. 81. See also *King v. Dedham Bank*, 15 Mass. 454; *Gordon v. Ingraham*, 1 Grant's Cases, 152; *People v. Supervisors of New York*, 16 N. Y. 432; *Beebe v. State*, 6 Ind. 515; *Greenough v. Greenough*, 11 Penn. St. 494; *Taylor v. Place*, 4 R. I. 324.

nature a judicial act. But to do the last — to pass new rules for the regulation of new controversies — is in its nature a legislative act; and if these rules interfere with the past, or the present, and do not look wholly to the future, they violate the definition of a law as ‘a rule of civil conduct;’¹ because no rule of conduct can with consistency operate upon what occurred before the rule itself was promulgated.

“It is the province of judicial power, also, to decide private disputes between or concerning persons; but of legislative power to regulate public concerns, and to make laws for the benefit and welfare of the State. Nor does the passage of private statutes conflict with these principles; because such statutes, when lawful, are enacted on petition, or by the consent of all concerned; or else they forbear to interfere with past transactions and vested rights.”²

With these definitions and explanations, we shall now proceed to consider some of the cases in which the courts have attempted to draw the line of distinction between the proper functions of the legislative and judicial departments, in cases where it has been claimed that the legislature have exceeded their power by invading the domain of judicial authority.

[* 93]

* *Declaratory Statutes.*

Legislation is either introductory of new rules, or it is declaratory of existing rules. “A declaratory statute is one which is passed in order to put an end to a doubt as to what is the common law, or the meaning of another statute, and which declares what it is and ever has been.”³ Such a statute, therefore, is always in a certain sense retrospective; because it assumes to determine

¹ 1 Bl. Comm. 44. The distinction between legislative and judicial power lies between a rule and a sentence. Shrader, *Ex parte*, 33 Cal. 279. See Shumway v. Bennett, 29 Mich. 451; Supervisors of Election, 114 Mass. 247. The legislature cannot empower election boards to decide whether one by duelling has forfeited his right to vote or hold office. Commonwealth v. Jones, 10 Bush,

725; Burkett v. McCurdy, 10 Bush, 758.

² Merrill v. Sherburne, 1 N. H. 204. See Jones v. Perry, 10 Yerg. 69; Taylor v. Porter, 4 Hill, 144; Ogden v. Blackledge, 2 Cranch, 272; Dash v. Van Kleeck, 7 Johns. 498; Wilkinson v. Leland, 2 Pet. 657; Leland v. Wilkinson, 10 Pet. 297.

³ Bouv. Law Dict. “Statute;” Austin on Jurisprudence, Lec. 37.

what the law was before it was passed ; and as a declaratory statute is important only in those cases where doubts have already arisen, the statute, when passed, may be found to declare the law to be different from what it has already been adjudged to be by the courts. Thus Mr. Fox's Libel Act declared that, by the law of England, juries were judges of the law in prosecutions for libel ; it did not purport to introduce a new rule, but to declare a rule already and always in force. Yet previous to the passage of this act the courts had repeatedly held that the jury in these cases were only to pass upon the fact of publication and the truth of the innuendoes ; and whether the publication was libellous or not was a question of law which addressed itself exclusively to the court. It would appear, therefore, that the legislature declared the law to be what the courts had declared it was not. So in the State of New York, after the courts had held that insurance companies were taxable to a certain extent under an existing statute, the legislature passed another act, declaring that such companies were only taxable at a certain other rate ; and it was thereby declared that such was the intention and true construction of the original statute.¹ In these cases it will be perceived that the courts, in the due exercise of their authority as interpreters of the laws, have declared what the rule established by the common law or by statute is, and that the legislature has then interposed, put its own construction upon the existing law, and in effect declared the judicial interpretation to be unfounded and unwarrantable. The courts in these cases have clearly kept within the proper limits of their jurisdiction, and if they have erred, the error has been one of judgment only, and has not extended to usurpation of power. Was the legislature also within the limits of its authority when it passed the declaratory statute ?

The decision of this question must depend perhaps [94] upon the purpose which was in the mind of the legislature in passing the declaratory statute ; whether the design was to give to the rule now declared a retrospective operation, or, on the other hand, merely to establish a construction of the doubtful law for the determination of cases that may arise in the future. It is always competent to change an existing law by a declaratory statute ; and where the statute is only to operate upon future

¹ *People v. Supervisors of New York*, 16 N. Y. 424.

cases, it is no objection to its validity that it assumes the law to have been in the past what it is now declared that it shall be in the future.¹ But the legislative action cannot be made to retroact upon past controversies, and to reverse decisions which the courts, in the exercise of their undoubted authority, have made ; for this would not only be the exercise of judicial power, but it would be its exercise in the most objectionable and offensive form, since the legislature would in effect sit as a court of review to which parties might appeal when dissatisfied with the rulings of the courts.²

¹ Union Iron Co. v. Pierce, 4 Biss. 827.

² In several different cases the courts of Pennsylvania had decided that a testator's mark to his name, at the foot of a testamentary paper, but without proof that the name was written by his express direction, was not the signature required by the statute, and the legislature, to use the language of Chief Justice Gibson, "declared, in order to overrule it, that every last will and testament heretofore made, or hereafter to be made, except such as may have been fully adjudicated prior to the passage of this act, to which the testator's name is subscribed by his direction, or to which the testator has made his mark or cross, shall be deemed and taken to be valid. How this mandate to the courts to establish a particular interpretation of a particular statute can be taken for any thing else than an exercise of judicial power in settling a question of interpretation, I know not. The judiciary had certainly recognized a legislative interpretation of a statute before it had itself acted, and consequently before a purchaser had been misled by its judgment; but he might have paid for a title on the unmistakable meaning of plain words; and for the legislature subsequently to distort or pervert it, and to enact that white meant black, or that black meant white, would in the same degree be

an exercise of arbitrary and unconstitutional power." *Greenough v. Greenough*, 11 Penn. St. 494. The act in this case was held void so far as its operation was retrospective, but valid as to future cases. And see *Reiser v. Tell Association*, 39 Penn. St. 137. The constitution of Georgia entitled the head of a family to enter a homestead, and the courts decided that a single person, having no others dependent upon him, could not be regarded the head of a family, though keeping house with servants. Afterwards, the legislature passed an act, declaring that any single person living habitually as housekeeper to himself should be regarded as the head of a family. Held void as an exercise of judicial power. *Calhoun v. McLendon*, 42 Geo. 405. The fact that the courts had previously given a construction to the law may show more clearly a purpose in the legislature to exercise judicial authority, but it would not be essential to that end. As is well said in *Haley v. Philadelphia*, 68 Penn. St. 45 : "It would be monstrous to maintain that when the words and intention of an act were so plain that no court had ever been appealed to for the purpose of declaring their meaning, it was therefore in the power of the legislature, by a retrospective law, to put a construction upon them contrary to the obvious letter and spirit. *Reiser v. William Tell Fund Association*, 39 Penn. St.

As the legislature cannot set aside the construction of the law already applied by the courts to actual cases, neither can it compel the courts for the future to adopt a particular construction of a law which the legislature permits to remain in force. "To declare what the law *is*, or *has been*, is a judicial power; to declare what the law *shall be*, is legislative. One of the fundamental principles of all our governments is, that the legislative power * shall be separate from the judicial."¹ If the legislature [* 95] would prescribe a different rule for the future from that which the courts enforce, it must be done by statute, and cannot be done by a mandate to the courts, which leaves the law unchanged, but seeks to compel the courts to construe and apply it, not according to the judicial, but according to the legislative judgment.² But in any case the substance of the legislative action should be regarded rather than the form; and if it appears to be the intention to establish by declaratory statute a rule of conduct for the future, the courts should accept and act upon it, without too nicely inquiring whether the mode by which the new rule is established is or is not the best, most decorous, and suitable that could have been adopted.

If the legislature cannot thus indirectly control the action of the courts, by requiring of them a construction of the law according to its own views, it is very plain it cannot do so directly, by set-

137, is an authority in point against such a doctrine. An expository act of assembly is destitute of retroactive force, because it is an act of judicial power, and is in contravention of the ninth section of the ninth article of the constitution, which declares that no man can be deprived of his property unless 'by the judgment of his peers or the law of the land.' " See 8 Am. Rep. 155, 156. And on the force and effect of declaratory laws in general, see *Salters v. Tobias*, 3 Paige, 388; *Postmaster-General v. Early*, 12 Wheat. 148; *Union Iron Co. v. Pierce*, 4 Biss. 327; *Planters' Bank v. Black*, 19 Miss. 43; *Gough v. Pratt*, 9 Md. 526.

¹ *Dash v. Van Kleeck*, 7 Johns. 498, per *Thompson*, J.; *Ogden v. Blackledge*, 2 Cranch, 272; *Lambert-*

son v. Hogan, 2 Penn. St. 25; *Seibert v. Linton*, 5 W. Va. 57; *Arnold v. Kelley*, 5 W. Va. 448; *McDaniel v. Correll*, 19 Ill. 226. A legislative act directing the levy and collection of a tax which has already been declared illegal by the judiciary, is void, as an attempted reversal of judicial action. *Mayor, &c. v. Horn*, 26 Md. 194; *Butler v. Supervisors of Saginaw*, 26 Mich. 25. This doctrine, however, would not prevent the correction of mere errors in taxation by legislation of a retrospective character. See *post*, p. * 371.

² *Governor v. Porter*, 5 Humph. 165; *People v. Supervisors, &c.*, 16 N. Y. 424; *Reiser v. Tell Association*, 39 Penn. St. 137; *O'Conner v. Warner*, 4 W. & S. 227; *Lambertson v. Hogan*, 2 Penn. St. 25.

ting aside their judgments, compelling them to grant new trials,¹ ordering the discharge of offenders,² or directing what particular steps shall be taken in the progress of a judicial inquiry.³

¹ *Lewis v. Webb*, 3 Me. 326; *Durham v. Lewiston*, 4 Me. 140; *Atkinson v. Dunlap*, 50 Me. 111; *Bates v. Kimball*, 2 Chip. 77; *Staniford v. Barry*, 1 Aik. 314; *Merrill v. Sherburne*, 1 N. H. 199; Opinion of Judges in *Matter of Dorr*, 3 R. I. 299; *Taylor v. Place*, 4 R. I. 324; *Dechastellux v. Fairchild*, 15 Penn. St. 18; *Young v. State Bank*, 4 Ind. 301; *Beebe v. State*, 6 Ind. 515; *Lanier v. Gallatas*, 13 La. Ann. 175; *Mayor, &c. v. Horn*, 26 Md. 194; *Weaver v. Lapsley*, 43 Ala. 224; *Saunders v. Cabaniss*, 43 Ala. 173; *Moser v. White*, 29 Mich. 59; *Sydnor v. Palmer*, 32 Wis. 409; *People v. Frisbie*, 26 Cal. 135; *Lawson v. Jeffries*, 47 Miss. 686; s. c. 12 Am. Rep. 342. And see *post*, pp. *391-*393 and notes. It is not competent by legislation to authorize the court of final resort to reopen and rehear cases previously decided. *Dorsey v. Dorsey*, 37 Md. 64; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 528. The legislature may control remedies, &c., but, when the matter has proceeded to judgment, it has passed beyond legislative control. *Oliver v. McClure*, 28 Ark. 555; *Griffin's Executor v. Cunningham*, 20 Gratt. 31; *Teel v. Yancey*, 23 Gratt. 691; *Hooker v. Hooker*, 18 Miss. 599.

² In *State v. Fleming*, 7 Humph. 152, a legislative resolve that "no fine, forfeiture, or imprisonment, should be imposed or recovered under the act of 1837 [then in force], and that all causes pending in any of the courts for such offence should be dismissed," was held void as an invasion of judicial authority. The legislature cannot declare a forfeiture of a right to act as curators of a college. *State v. Adams*, 44 Mo. 570. Nor can it authorize the governor or any other State officer to

pass upon the validity of State grants and correct errors therein; this being judicial. *Hilliard v. Connelly*, 7 Geo. 172. Nor, where a corporate charter provides that it shall not be repealed "unless it shall be made to appear to the legislature that there has been a violation by the company of some of its provisions," can there be a repeal before a judicial inquiry into the violation. *Flint, &c. Plank Road Co. v. Woodhull*, 25 Mich. 99. A legislative act cannot turn divorces *nisi* into absolute divorces, of its own force. *Sparhawk v. Sparhawk*, 116 Mass. 315. But to take away by statute a statutory right of appeal is not an exercise of judicial authority. *Ex parte McCardle*, 7 Wall. 506. And it has been held that a statute allowing an appeal in a particular case was valid. *Prout v. Berry*, 2 Gill, 147; *State v. Northern Central R. R. Co.*, 18 Md. 193. A retroactive statute, giving the right of appeal in cases in which it had previously been lost by lapse of time, was sustained in *Page v. Mathews's Adm'r*, 40 Ala. 547. But in *Carleton v. Goodwin's Ex'r*, 41 Ala. 153, an act the effect of which would have been to revive discontinued appeals was held void as an exercise of judicial authority. See cases cited in next note.

³ Opinions of Judges on the *Dorr Case*, 3 R. I. 299. In the case of *Picquet*, Appellant, 5 Pick. 64, the judge of probate had ordered letters of administration to issue to an applicant therefor, on his giving bond in the penal sum of \$50,000, with sureties within the Commonwealth, for the faithful performance of his duties. He was unable to give the bond, and applied to the legislature for relief. Thereupon a resolve was

* And as a court must act as an organized body of judges, [* 96] and, where differences of opinion arise, they can only decide by majorities, it has been held that it would not be in the power of the legislature to provide that, in certain contingencies, the opinion of the minority of a court, vested with power by the constitution, should prevail, so that the decision of the court in such cases should be rendered against the judgment of its members.¹

Nor is it in the power of the legislature to bind individuals by a recital of facts in a statute, to be used as evidence against the parties interested. A recital of facts in the preamble of a statute

passed "empowering" the judge of probate to grant the letters of administration, provided the petitioner should give bond with his brother, a resident of Paris, France, as surety, and "that such bond should be in lieu of any and all bond or bonds by any law or statute in this Commonwealth now in force required." &c. The judge of probate refused to grant the letters on the terms specified in this resolve, and the Supreme Court, while holding that it was not compulsory upon him, also declared their opinion that, if it were so, it would be inoperative and void. In *Bradford v. Brooks*, 2 Aik. 284, it was decided that the legislature had no power to revive a commission for proving claims against an estate after it had once expired. See also *Bagg's Appeal*, 43 Penn. St. 512; *Trustees v. Bailey*, 10 Fla. 238. In *Hill v. Sunderland*, 3 Vt. 507, and *Burch v. Newberry*, 10 N. Y. 374, it was held that the legislature had no power to grant to parties a right to appeal after it was gone under the general law. In *Burt v. Williams*, 24 Ark. 91, it was held that the granting of continuances of pending cases was the exercise of judicial authority, and a legislative act assuming to do this was void. And where, by the general law, the courts have no authority to grant a divorce for a given cause,

the legislature cannot confer the authority in a particular case. *Simmonds v. Simmonds*, 103 Mass. 572; s. c. 4 Am. Rep. 576. And see *post*, pp. * 110, note, *392 and note.

¹ In *Clapp v. Ely*, 3 Dutch. 622, it was held that a statute which provided that no judgment of the Supreme Court should be reversed by the Court of Errors and Appeals, unless a majority of those members of the court who were competent to sit on the hearing and decision should concur in the reversal, was unconstitutional. Its effect would be, if the court were not full, to make the opinion of the minority in favor of affirmance control that of the majority in favor of reversal, unless the latter were a majority of the whole court. Such a provision in the constitution might be proper and unexceptionable; but if the constitution has created a court of appeals, without any restriction of this character, the ruling of this case is that the legislature cannot impose it. The court was nearly equally divided, standing seven to six. A statute authorizing an unofficial person to sit in the place of a judge who is disqualified, was held void in *Van Slyke v. Insurance Co.*, 39 Wis. 390; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 50. That judicial power cannot be delegated, see *Cohen v. Hoff*, 3 Brev. 500.

may perhaps be evidence, where it relates to matters of a public nature, as that riots or disorders exist in a certain part of the country ;¹ but where the facts concern the rights of individuals, the legislature cannot adjudicate upon them. As private statutes are generally obtained on the application of some party interested, and are put in form to suit his wishes, perhaps their exclusion from being made evidence against any other party would result from other general principles ; but it is clear that the recital could have no force, except as a judicial finding of facts ; and that such finding is not within the legislative province.²

[* 97] * We come now to a class of cases in regard to which there has been serious contrariety of opinion ; springing from the fact, perhaps, that the purpose sought to be accomplished by the statutes is generally effected by judicial proceedings, so that if the statutes are not a direct invasion of judicial authority, they at least cover ground which the courts usually occupy under general laws conferring the jurisdiction upon them. We refer to

Statutes empowering Guardians and other Trustees to sell Lands.

Whenever it becomes necessary or proper to sell the estate of a decedent for the payment of debts, or of a lunatic or other incompetent person for the same purpose, or for future support, or of a minor to provide the means for his education and nurture, or for the most profitable investment of the proceeds, or of tenants in common to effectuate a partition between them, it will probably be found in every State that some court is vested with jurisdiction to make the necessary order, if the facts after a hearing of the parties in interest seem to render it important. The case is eminently one for judicial investigation. There are facts to be inquired into, in regard to which it is always possible that disputes may arise ; the party in interest is often incompetent to act on his own behalf, and his interest is carefully to be inquired into and guarded ; and as the proceeding will usually be *ex parte*, there is more than the ordinary opportunity for fraud upon the party interested, as well as upon the authority which

¹ Rex v. Sutton, 4 M. & S. 532.

80; Lothrop v. Steadman, 42 Conn.

² Elmendorf v. Carmichael, 3 Litt.

583, 592.

478 ; Parmelee v. Thompson, 7 Hill

grants permission. It is highly and peculiarly proper, therefore, that by general laws judicial inquiry should be provided for these cases, and that such laws should require notice to all proper parties, and afford an opportunity for the presentation of any facts which might bear upon the propriety of granting the applications.

But it will sometimes be found that the general laws provided for these cases are not applicable to some which arise ; or, if applicable, that they do not accomplish fully all that in some cases seems desirable ; and in these cases, and perhaps also in some others without similar excuse, it has not been unusual for legislative authority to intervene, and by special statute to grant the permission which, under the general law, would be granted by the courts. The * power to pass such statutes [* 98] has often been disputed, and it may be well to see upon what basis of authority as well as of reason it rests.

If in fact the inquiry which precedes the grant of authority is in its nature judicial, it would seem clear that such statutes must be ineffectual and void. But if judicial inquiry is not essential, and the legislature may confer the power of sale in such a case upon an *ex parte* presentation of evidence, or upon the representations of the parties without any proof whatever, then we must consider the general laws to be passed, not because the cases fall necessarily within the province of judicial action, but because the courts can more conveniently consider, and more properly, safely, and inexpensively pass upon such cases, than the legislative body, to which the power primarily belongs.¹

The rule upon this subject, which appears to be deducible from the authorities, is this : If the party standing in position of trustee applies for permission to convert by a sale the real property into personal, in order to effectuate the purposes of the trust, and to accomplish objects in the interest of the *cestui que trust* not otherwise attainable, there is nothing in the granting of

¹ There are constitutional provisions in Kentucky, Virginia, Missouri, Oregon, Nevada, Indiana, Maryland, New Jersey, Arkansas, Florida, Illinois, Wisconsin, Texas, West Virginia, Michigan, and Colorado, forbidding special laws licensing the sale of the lands of minors and other

persons under legal disability. Perhaps the general provision in some other constitutions, forbidding special laws in cases where a general law could be made applicable, might also be held to exclude such special authorization.

permission which is in its nature judicial. To grant permission is merely to enlarge the sphere of the judiciary authority, the better to accomplish the purpose for which the trusteeship exists ; and while it would be entirely proper to make the questions which might arise assume a judicial form, by referring them to some proper court for consideration and decision, there is no usurpation of power if the legislature shall, by direct action, grant the permission.

In the case of *Rice v. Parkman*,¹ certain minors having become entitled to real estate by descent from their mother, the legislature passed a special statute empowering their father as guardian for them, and, after giving bond to the judge of probate, to sell and convey the lands, and put the proceeds at interest on good security for the benefit of the minor owners. A sale was made accordingly ; but the children, after coming of age, brought suit against the party claiming under the sale, insisting that the special statute was void. There was in force at the time this special statute was passed a general statute, under which license might have been granted by the courts ; but it was held that

this general law did not deprive the legislature of that
[* 99] full * and complete control over such cases which it would

have possessed had no such statute existed. “ If,” say the court, “ the power by which the resolve authorizing the sale in this case was passed were of a judicial nature, it would be very clear that it could not have been exercised by the legislature without violating an express provision of the constitution. But it does not seem to us to be of this description of power ; for it was not a case of controversy between party and party, nor is there any decree or judgment affecting the title to property. The only object of the authority granted by the legislature was to transmute real into personal estate, for purposes beneficial to all who were interested therein. This is a power frequently exercised by the legislature of this State, since the adoption of the constitution, and by the legislature of the province and of the colony, while under the sovereignty of Great Britain, analogous to the power exercised by the British Parliament on similar subjects, time out of mind. Indeed, it seems absolutely necessary for the interest of those who, by the general rules of law, are incapacitated from disposing of their property, that a power should exist somewhere of

¹ 16 Mass. 326.

converting lands into money. For otherwise many minors might suffer, although having property ; it not being in a condition to yield an income. This power must rest in the legislature, in this Commonwealth ; that body being alone competent to act as the general guardian and protector of those who are disabled to act for themselves.

“ It was undoubtedly wise to delegate this authority to other bodies, whose sessions are regular and constant, and whose structure may enable them more easily to understand the merits of the particular application brought before them. But it does not follow that, because the power has been delegated by the legislature to courts of law, it is judicial in its character. For aught we see, the same authority might have been given to the selectmen of each town, or to the clerks or registers of the counties, it being a mere ministerial act, certainly requiring discretion, and sometimes knowledge of law, for its due exercise, but still partaking in no degree of the characteristics of judicial power. It is doubtless included in the general authority granted by the people to the legislature by the constitution. For full power and authority is given from time to time to make, ordain, and establish all manner of wholesome and reasonable orders, laws, statutes, * and ordinances, directions, and restrictions (so as [* 100] the same be not repugnant or contrary to the constitution), as they shall judge to be for the good and welfare of the Commonwealth, and of the subjects thereof. No one imagines that, under this general authority, the legislature could deprive a citizen of his estate, or impair any valuable contract in which he might be interested. But there seems to be no reason to doubt that, upon his application, or the application of those who properly represent him, if disabled from acting himself, a beneficial change of his estate, or a sale of it for purposes necessary and convenient for the lawful owner, is a just and proper subject for the exercise of that authority. It is, in fact, protecting him in his property, which the legislature is bound to do, and enabling him to derive subsistence, comfort, and education from property which might otherwise be wholly useless during that period of life when it might be most beneficially employed.

“ If this be not true, then the general laws, under which so many estates of minors, persons *non compos mentis*, and others, have been sold and converted into money, are unauthorized by

the constitution, and void. For the courts derive their authority from the legislature, and, it not being of a judicial nature, if the legislature had it not, they could not communicate it to any other body. Thus, if there were no power to relieve those from actual distress who had unproductive property, and were disabled from conveying it themselves, it would seem that one of the most essential objects of government—that of providing for the welfare of the citizens—would be lost. But the argument which has most weight on the part of the defendants is, that the legislature has exercised its power over this subject in the only constitutional way, by establishing a general provision; and that, having done this, their authority has ceased, they having no right to interfere in particular cases. And if the question were one of expediency only, we should perhaps be convinced by the argument, that it would be better for all such applications to be made to the courts empowered to sustain them. But as a question of right, we think the argument fails. The constituent, when he has delegated an authority without an interest, may do the act himself which he has authorized another to do; and especially when that constituent is the legislature, and is not prohibited by the constitution from exercising the authority. Indeed, [* 101] the * whole authority might be revoked, and the legislature resume the burden of the business to itself, if in its wisdom it should determine that the common welfare required it. It is not legislation which must be by general acts and rules, but the use of a parental or tutorial power, for purposes of kindness, without interfering with or prejudice to the rights of any but those who apply for specific relief. The title of strangers is not in any degree affected by such an interposition.”¹

¹ In *Shumway v. Bennett*, 29 Mich. 451, the distinction between judicial and administrative power is pointed out, and it is held that the question of incorporating territory as a village cannot be made a judicial question. A like decision is made by Chancellor Cooper, in *Ex parte Burns*, 1 Tenn. Ch. R. 83, though it is said in that case that the organization of corporations which are created by legislative authority may be referred to the courts. See, on the same

subject, *Galesburg v. Hawkinson*, 75 Ill. 152. Compare *Burlington v. Leebrick*, 43 Iowa, 252. In *Supervisors of Election*, 114 Mass. 247, s. c. 19 Am. Rep. 341, it is decided that the courts cannot be vested with authority to appoint inspectors of election. For the distinction between political and judicial power, see further, *Dickey v. Reed*, 78 Ill. 261; *Commonwealth v. Jones*, 10 Bush, 725. And see *post*, p. * 106 and notes. In *Hegarty's Appeal*, 75 Penn. St.

A similar statute was sustained by the Court for the Correction of Errors in New York. "It is clearly," says the Chancellor, "within the powers of the legislature, as *parens patriæ*, to prescribe such rules and regulations as it may deem proper for the superintendence, disposition, and management of the property and effects of infants, lunatics, and other persons who are incapable of managing their own affairs. But even that power cannot constitutionally be so far extended as to transfer the beneficial use of the property to another person, except in those cases where it can legally be presumed the owner of the property would himself have given the use of his property to the other, if he had been in a situation to act for himself, as in the case of a provision out of the estate of an infant or lunatic for the support of an indigent parent or other near relative."¹

503, the power of the legislature to authorize a trustee to sell the lands of parties who were *sui juris*, and might act on their own behalf, was denied, and the case was distinguished from *Norris v. Clymer*, 2 Penn. St. 277, and others which had followed it.

¹ *Cochran v. Van Surley*, 20 Wend. 373. See the same case in the Supreme Court, *sub nom.* *Clarke v. Van Surley*, 15 Wend. 436. See also *Suydam v. Williamson*, 24 How. 427; *Williamson v. Suydam*, 6 Wall. 723; *Heirs of Holman v. Bank of Norfolk*, 12 Ala. 369; *Florentine v. Barton*, 2 Wall. 210. In *Brevoort v. Grace*, 53 N. Y. 245, the power of the legislature to authorize the sale of lands of infants by special statute was held to extend to the future contingent interests of those not in being, but not to the interests of non-consenting adults, competent to act on their own behalf. In *Opinions of the Judges*, 4 N. H. 572, the validity of such a special statute, under the constitution of New Hampshire, was denied. The judges say: "The objection to the exercise of such a power by the legislature is, that it is in its nature both legislative and judicial. It is the province of the legislature to prescribe the rule of law, but to apply it

to particular cases is the business of the courts of law. And the thirty-eighth article in the Bill of Rights declares that 'in the government of the State the three essential powers thereof, to wit, the legislative, executive, and judicial, ought to be kept as separate from, and independent of, each other as the nature of a free government will admit, or as consistent with that chain of connection that binds the whole fabric of the constitution in one indissoluble bond of union and amity.' The exercise of such a power by the legislature can never be necessary. By the existing laws, judges of probate have very extensive jurisdiction to license the sale of real estate of minors by their guardians. If the jurisdiction of the judges of probate be not sufficiently extensive to reach all proper cases, it may be a good reason why that jurisdiction should be extended, but can hardly be deemed a sufficient reason for the particular interposition of the legislature in an individual case. If there be a defect in the laws, they should be amended. Under our institutions all men are viewed as equal, entitled to enjoy equal privileges, and to be governed by equal laws. If it be fit and proper that license should

[* 102] * The same ruling has often been made in analogous cases. In Ohio, a special act of the legislature authorizing commissioners to make sale of lands held in fee tail, by devisees under a will, in order to cut off the entailment and effect a partition between them, — the statute being applied for by the mother of the devisees and the executor of the will, and on behalf of the devisees, — was held not obnoxious to constitutional objection, and to be sustainable on immemorial legislative usage, and on the same ground which would support general laws for the same purpose.¹ In a case in the Supreme Court of the United States, where an executrix who had proved a will in New Hampshire made sale of lands without authority in Rhode Island,

for the purpose of satisfying debts against the estate, a
[* 103] subsequent act of the Rhode Island legislature, * confirming the sale, was held not an encroachment upon

be given to one guardian, under particular circumstances, to sell the estate of his ward, it is fit and proper that all other guardians should, under similar circumstances, have the same license. This is the very genius and spirit of our institutions. And we are of opinion that an act of the legislature to authorize the sale of the land of a particular minor by his guardian cannot be easily reconciled with the spirit of the article in the Bill of Rights which we have just cited. It is true that the grant of such a license by the legislature to the guardian is intended as a privilege and a benefit to the ward. But by the law of the land no minor is capable of assenting to a sale of his real estate in such a manner as to bind himself. And no guardian is permitted by the same law to determine when the estate of his ward ought and when it ought not to be sold. In the contemplation of the law, the one has not sufficient discretion to judge of the propriety and expediency of a sale of his estate, and the other is not to be intrusted with the power of judging. Such being the general law of the land, it is presumable that the legislature would be

unwilling to rest the justification of an act authorizing the sale of a minor's estate upon any assent which the guardian or the minor could give in the proceeding. The question then is, as it seems to us, Can a ward be deprived of his inheritance without his consent by an act of the legislature which is intended to apply to no other individual? The fifteenth article of the Bill of Rights declares that no subject shall be deprived of his property but by the judgment of his peers or the law of the land. Can an act of the legislature, intended to authorize one man to sell the land of another without his consent be 'the law of the land' in a free country? If the question proposed to us can be resolved into these questions, as it appears to us it may, we feel entirely confident that the representatives of the people of this State will agree with us in the opinion we feel ourselves bound to express on the question submitted to us, that the legislature cannot authorize a guardian of minors, by a special act or resolve, to make a valid conveyance of the real estate of his wards."

¹ Carroll v. Lessee of Olmsted, 16 Ohio, 251.

the judicial power. The land, it was said, descended to the heirs subject to a lien for the payment of debts, and there is nothing in the nature of the act of authorizing a sale to satisfy the lien, which requires that it should be performed by a judicial tribunal, or that it should be performed by a delegate rather than by the legislature itself. It is remedial in its nature, to give effect to existing rights.¹ The case showed the actual existence of debts, and indeed a judicial license for the sale of lands to satisfy them had been granted in New Hampshire before the sale was made. The decision was afterwards followed in a carefully considered case in the same court.² In each of these cases it is assumed that the legislature does not by the special statute determine the existence or amount of the debts, and disputes concerning them would be determinable in the usual modes. Many other decisions have been made to the same effect.³

This species of legislation may perhaps be properly called prerogative remedial legislation. It hears and determines no rights; it deprives no one of his property. It simply authorizes one's real estate to be turned into personal, on the application of the person representing his interest, and under such circumstances that the consent of the owner, if capable of giving it, would be presumed. It is in the nature of the grant of a privilege to one

¹ *Wilkinson v. Leland*, 2 Pet. 660. Compare *Brevoort v. Grace*, 53 N. Y. 245.

² *Watkins v. Holman's Lessee*, 16 Pet. 25-60. See also *Florentine v. Barton*, 2 Wall. 210; *Doe v. Douglass*, 8 Blackf. 10.

³ *Thurston v. Thurston*, 6 R. I. 296, 302; *Williamson v. Williamson*, 3 S. & M. 715; *McComb v. Gilkey*, 29 Miss. 146; *Boon v. Bowers*, 30 Miss. 246; *Stewart v. Griffith*, 33 Mo. 13; *Estep v. Hutchman*, 14 S. & R. 435; *Snowhill v. Snowhill*, 2 Green, Ch. 20; *Dorsey v. Gilbert*, 11 G. & J. 87; *Norris v. Clymer*, 2 Penn. St. 277; *Sergeant v. Kuhn*, 2 Penn. St. 393; *Ker v. Kitchen*, 17 Penn. St. 433; *Coleman v. Carr*, Walker, 258; *Davison v. Johonnot*, 7 Met. 388; *Towle v. Forney*, 14 N. Y. 423; *Leggett v. Hunter*, 19 N. Y. 445; *Brevoort v.*

Grace, 53 N. Y. 245; *Gannett v. Leonard*, 47 Mo. 205; *Kibby v. Chetwood's Adm'rs*, 4 T. B. Monr. 94; *Shehan's Heirs v. Barnett's Heirs*, 6 T. B. Monr. 594; *Davis v. State Bank*, 7 Ind. 316; *Richardson v. Mouson*, 22 Conn. 98; *Ward v. New England, &c. Co.*, 1 Cliff. 565; *Sohier v. Massachusetts, &c. Hospital*, 3 Cush. 483; *Lobrano v. Nelligan*, 9 Wall. 295. *Contra*, *Brenham v. Story*, 39 Cal. 179. In *Moore v. Maxwell*, 18 Ark. 469, a special statute authorizing the administrator of one who held the mere naked legal title to convey to the owner of the equitable title was held valid. In *Stanley v. Colt*, 5 Wall. 119, an act permitting the sale of real estate which had been devised to charitable uses was sustained, — no diversion of the gift being made.

person, which at the same time affects injuriously the rights of no other.¹

But a different case is presented when the legislature assumes to authorize a person who does not occupy a fiduciary [*104] relation to *the owner, to make sale of real estate, to satisfy demands which he asserts, but which are not judicially determined, or for any other purpose not connected with the convenience or necessity of the owner himself. An act of the legislature of Illinois undertook to empower a party who had applied for it to make sale of the lands pertaining to the estate of a deceased person, in order to raise a certain specified sum of money which the legislature assumed to be due to him and another person, for moneys by them advanced and liabilities incurred on behalf of the estate, and to apply the same to the extinguishment of their claims. Now it is evident that this act was in the nature of a judicial decree, passed on the application of parties adverse in interest to the estate, and in effect adjudging a certain amount to be due them, and ordering lands to be sold for its satisfaction. As was well said by the Supreme Court of Illinois, in adjudging the act void: "If this is not the exercise of a power of inquiry into, and a determination of facts, between debtor and creditor, and that, too, *ex parte* and summary in its character, we are at a loss to understand the meaning of terms; nay, that it is adjudging and directing the application of one person's property to another, on a claim of indebtedness, without notice to, or hearing of, the parties whose estate is divested by the act. That the exercise of such power is in its nature clearly judicial, we think too apparent to need argument to illustrate its truth. It is so self-evident from the facts disclosed that it proves itself."²

¹ It would be equally competent for the legislature to authorize a person under legal disability — *e. g.* an infant — to convey his estate, as to authorize it to be conveyed by guardian. *McComb v. Gilkey*, 29 Miss. 146.

² *Lane v. Dorman*, 4 Ill. 242. In *Dubois v. McLean*, 4 McLean, 486, Judge *Pope* assumes that the case of *Lane v. Dorman* decides a special act, authorizing an executor to sell lands

of the testator to pay debts against his estate would be unconstitutional. We do not so understand that decision. On the contrary, another case in the same volume, *Edwards v. Pope*, p. 465, fully sustains the cases before decided, distinguishing them from *Lane v. Dorman*. But that indeed is also done in the principal case, where the court, after referring to similar cases in Kentucky, say: "These cases are clearly distinguished from the case

* A case in harmony with the one last referred to was [* 105] decided by the Supreme Court of Michigan. Under the act of Congress "for the relief of citizens of towns upon the lands of the United States, under certain circumstances," approved May 23, 1844, and which provided that the trust under said act should be conducted under such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the legislative authority of the State," &c., the legislature passed an act authorizing the trustee to give deeds to a person named therein, and those claiming under him; thus undertaking to dispose of the whole trust to the person thus named and his grantees, and authorizing no one else to be considered or to receive any relief. This was very plainly an attempted adjudication upon the rights of the parties concerned; it did not establish regulations for the administration of the trust, but it adjudged the trust property to certain claimants exclusively, in disregard of any rights which might exist in others; and it was therefore declared to be void.¹ And it has

at bar. The acts were for the benefit of all the creditors of the estates, without distinction; and in one case, in addition, for the purpose of perfecting titles contracted to be made by the intestate. The claims of the creditors of the intestate were to be established by judicial or other satisfactory legal proceedings, and, in truth, in the case last cited, the commissioners were nothing more than special commissioners. The legislative department, in passing these acts, investigated nothing, nor did an act which could be deemed a judicial inquiry. It neither examined proof, nor determined the nature or extent of claims; it merely authorized the application of the real estate to the payment of debts generally, discriminating in favor of no one creditor, and giving no one a preference over another. Not so in the case before us; the amount is investigated and ascertained, and the sale is directed for the benefit of two persons exclusively. The proceeds are to be applied to the payment of such claims and none other, for liabilities said to be

incurred but not liquidated or satisfied; and those, too, created after the death of the intestate." See also *Mason v. Wait*, 5 Ill. 127-134; *Davenport v. Young*, 16 Ill. 551; *Rozier v. Fagan*, 46 Ill. 404. The case of *Estep v. Hutchman*, 14 S. & R. 435, would seem to be more open to question on this point than any of the others before cited. It was the case of a special statute, authorizing the guardian of infant heirs to convey their lands in satisfaction of a contract made by their ancestor; and which was sustained. Compare this with *Jones v. Perry*, 10 Yerg. 59, where an act authorizing a guardian to sell lands to pay the ancestor's debts was held void.

¹ *Cash, Appellant*, 6 Mich. 193. The case of *Powers v. Bergen*, 6 N. Y. 358, is perhaps to be referred to another principle than that of encroachment upon judicial authority. That was a case where the legislature, by special act, had undertaken to authorize the sale of property, not for the purpose of satisfying liens upon it, or of meeting or in any way

[* 106] also been held that, whether a * corporation has been guilty of abuse of authority under its charter, so as justly to subject it to forfeiture,¹ and whether a widow is entitled to

providing for the necessities or wants of the owners, but solely, after paying expenses, for the investment of the proceeds. It appears from that case that the executors under the will of the former owner held the lands in trust for a daughter of the testator during her natural life, with a vested remainder in fee in her two children. The special act assumed to empower them to sell and convey the complete fee, and apply the proceeds, *first*, to the payment of their commissions, costs, and expenses; *second*, to the discharge of assessments, liens, charges, and incumbrances on the land, of which, however, none were shown to exist; and, *third*, to invest the proceeds and pay over the income, after deducting taxes and charges, to the daughter during her life, and after her decease to convey, assign, or pay over the same to the persons who would be entitled under the will. The court regarded this as an unauthorized interference with private property upon no necessity, and altogether void, as depriving the owners of their property contrary to the "law of the land." At the same time the authority of those cases, where it has been held that the legislature, acting as the guardian and protector of those who are disabled to act for themselves by reason of infancy, lunacy, or other like cause, may constitutionally pass either general or private laws, under which an effectual disposition of their property might be made, was not questioned. The court cite, with apparent approval, the cases, among others, of *Rice v. Parkman*, 16 Mass. 326; *Cochran v. Van Surlay*, 20 Wend. 365; and *Wilkinson v. Leland*, 2 Pet. 657. The case of *Ervine's Appeal*, 16 Penn. St. 258, was similar, in the

principles involved, to *Powers v. Bergen*, and was decided in the same way. See also *Kneass's Appeal*, 31 Penn. St. 87, and compare with *Ker v. Kitchen*, 17 Penn. St. 438; *Martin's Appeal*, 23 Penn. 437; *Hegarty's Appeal*, 75 Penn. St. 503; *Tharp v. Fleming*, 1 Houston, 592.

¹ *State v. Noyes*, 47 Me. 189; *Campbell v. Union Bank*, 6 How. (Miss.) 661; *Canal Co. v. Railroad Co.*, 4 G. & J. 122; *Regents of University v. Williams*, 9 G. & J. 365. In *Miners' Bank of Dubuque v. United States*, 1 Morris, 482, a clause in a charter authorizing the legislature to repeal it for any abuse or misuser of corporate privileges was held to refer the question of abuse to the legislative judgment. In *Erie & North East R. R. Co. v. Casey*, 26 Penn. St. 287, on the other hand, it was held that the legislature could not conclude the corporation by its repealing act, but that the question of abuse of corporate authority would be one of fact to be passed upon, if denied, by a jury, so that the act would be valid or void as the jury should find. Compare *Flint & Fentonville P. R. Co. v. Woodhull*, 25 Mich. 99, in which it was held that the reservation of a power to repeal a charter for violation of its provisions necessarily presented a judicial question, and the repeal must be preceded by a proper judicial finding. In *Carey v. Giles*, 9 Geo. 253, the appointment by the legislature of a receiver for an insolvent bank was sustained; and in *Hindman v. Piper*, 50 Mo. 292, a legislative appointment of a trustee was also sustained in a peculiar case. In *Lothrop v. Steadman*, 42 Conn. 583, the power of the legislature as an administrative measure to appoint a trustee to take charge of and manage

dower in a specified parcel of land,¹ are judicial questions which cannot be decided by the legislature. In these cases there are necessarily adverse parties; the questions that would arise are essentially judicial, and over them the courts possess jurisdiction at the common law; and it is presumable that legislative acts of this character must have been adopted carelessly, and without a due consideration of the proper boundaries which mark the separation of legislative from judicial duties.² As well might the legislature proceed to declare that one man is indebted to another in a sum specified, and establish by enactment a conclusive demand against him.³

* We have elsewhere referred to a number of cases where [* 107] statutes have been held unobjectionable which validated legal proceedings, notwithstanding irregularities apparent in them.⁴ These statutes may as properly be made applicable to judicial as to ministerial proceedings; and although, when they refer to such proceedings, they may at first seem like an interference with judicial authority, yet if they are only in aid of judicial proceed-

the affairs of a corporation whose charter had been repealed, was affirmed. For a similar principle, see *Albertson v. Landon*, 42 Conn. 209. And see *post*, p. * 365.

¹ *Edwards v. Pope*, 3 Scam. 465.

² The unjust and dangerous character of legislation of this description is well stated by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania: "When, in the exercise of proper legislative powers, general laws are enacted which bear, or may bear, on the whole community, if they are unjust and against the spirit of the constitution, the whole community will be interested to procure their repeal by a voice potential. And that is the great security for just and fair legislation. But when individuals are selected from the mass, and laws are enacted affecting their property, without summons or notice, at the instigation of an interested party, who is to stand up for them, thus isolated from the mass, in injury and injustice, or where are they to seek relief from such acts of despotic power? They

have no refuge but in the courts, the only secure place for determining conflicting rights by due course of law. But if the judiciary give way, and, in the language of the Chief Justice in *Greenough v. Greenough*, in 11 Penn. St. 494, 'confesses itself too weak to stand against the antagonism of the legislature and the bar,' one independent co-ordinate branch of the government will become the subservient handmaid of the other, and a quiet, insidious revolution will be effected in the administration of the government, whilst its form on paper remains the same." *Ervine's Appeal*, 16 Penn. St. 268.

³ A statute is void which undertakes to make railroad companies liable for the expense of coroners' inquests and of the burial of persons dying on the cars, or killed by collision or other accident occurring to the cars, irrespective of any question of negligence. *Ohio & M. R. R. Co. v. Lackey*, 78 Ill. 55; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 259.

⁴ See *post*, pp. * 371-* 381.

ings, and tend to their support by precluding parties from taking advantage of errors which do not affect their substantial rights, they cannot be obnoxious to the charge of usurping judicial power. The legislature does, or may, prescribe the rules under which the judicial power is exercised by the courts; and in doing so, it may dispense with any of those formalities which are not essential to the jurisdiction of the court; and whatever it may dispense with by statute anterior to the proceedings, we believe it may also dispense with by statute after the proceedings have been taken, if the court has failed to observe any of those formalities. But it would not be competent for the legislature to authorize a court to proceed and adjudicate upon the rights of parties, without giving them an opportunity to be heard before it; and, for the same reason, it would be incompetent for it, by retrospective legislation, to make valid proceedings which had been had in the courts, but which were void for want of jurisdiction over the parties. Such a legislative enactment would be doubly objectionable: *first*, as an exercise of judicial power, since, the proceedings in court being void, it would be the statute alone which would constitute an adjudication upon the rights of the parties; and, *second*, because, in all judicial proceedings, notice to parties and an opportunity to defend are essential, — both of which they would be deprived of in such a case.¹ And for like reasons a statute vali-

¹ In *McDaniel v. Correll*, 19 Ill. 226, it appeared that a statute had been passed to make valid certain legal proceedings by which an alleged will was adjudged void, and which were had against non-resident defendants, over whom the courts had obtained no jurisdiction. The court say: "If it was competent for the legislature to make a void proceeding valid, then it has been done in this case. Upon this question we cannot for a moment doubt or hesitate. They can no more impart a binding efficacy to a void proceeding, than they can take one man's property from him and give it to another. Indeed, to do the one is to accomplish the other. By the decree in this case the will in question was declared void, and, consequently, if effect be given to the

decree, the legacies given to those absent defendants by the will are taken from them and given to others, according to our statute of descents. Until the passage of the act in question, they were not bound by the verdict of the jury in this case, and it could not form the basis of a valid decree. Had the decree been rendered before the passage of the act, it would have been as competent to make that valid as it was to validate the antecedent proceedings upon which alone the decree could rest. The want of jurisdiction over the defendants was as fatal to the one as it could be to the other. If we assume the act to be valid, then the legacies which before belonged to the legatees have now ceased to be theirs, and this result has been brought about by the legislative

dating proceedings * had before an intruder into a judicial [* 108] office, before whom no one is authorized or required to appear, and who could have jurisdiction neither of the parties nor of the subject-matter, would also be void.¹

act alone. The effect of the act upon them is precisely the same as if it had declared in direct terms that the legacies bequeathed by this will to these defendants should not go to them, but should descend to the heirs-at-law of the testator, according to our law of descents. This it will not be pretended that they could do directly, and they had no more authority to do it indirectly, by making proceedings binding upon them which were void in law." See, to the same effect, *Richards v. Rote*, 68 Penn. St. 248; *Pryor v. Downey*, 50 Cal. 388; s. c. 19 Am. Rep. 656; *Lane v. Nelson*, 79 Penn. St. 407; *Shonk v. Brown*, 61 Penn. St. 320; *Spragg v. Shriver*, 25 Penn. St. 282.

¹ In *Denny v. Mattoon*, 2 Allen, 361, a judge in insolvency had made certain orders in a case pending in another jurisdiction, and which the courts subsequently declared to be void. The legislature then passed an act declaring that they "are hereby confirmed, and the same shall be taken and deemed good and valid in law, to all intents and purposes whatsoever." On the question of the validity of this act the court say: "The precise question is, whether it can be held to operate so as to confer a jurisdiction over parties and proceedings which it has been judicially determined does not exist, and give validity to acts and processes which have been adjudged void. The statement of this question seems to us to suggest the obvious and decisive objection to any construction of the statute which would lead to such a conclusion. It would be a direct exercise by the legislature of a power in its nature clearly judicial, from the use of which it is expressly prohibited by the thirtieth

article of the Declaration of Rights. The line which marks and separates judicial from legislative duties and functions is often indistinct and uncertain, and it is sometimes difficult to decide within which of the two classes a particular subject falls. All statutes of a declaratory nature, which are designed to interpret or give a meaning to previous enactments, or to confirm the rights of parties either under their own contracts or growing out of the proceedings of courts or public bodies, which lack legal validity, involve in a certain sense the exercise of a judicial power. They operate upon subjects which might properly come within the cognizance of the courts and form the basis of judicial consideration and judgment. But they may, nevertheless, be supported as being within the legitimate sphere of legislative action, on the ground that they do not declare or determine, but only confirm rights; that they give effect to the acts of parties according to their intent; that they furnish new and more efficacious remedies, or create a more beneficial interest or tenure, or, by supplying defects and curing informalities in the proceedings of courts, or of public officers acting within the scope of their authority, they give effect to acts to which there was the express or implied assent of the parties interested. Statutes which are intended to accomplish such purposes do not necessarily invade the province, or directly interfere with the action of judicial tribunals. But if we adopt the broadest and most comprehensive view of the power of the legislature, we must place some limit beyond which the authority of the legislature cannot go without trenching on

[* 109]

* *Legislative Divorces.*

There is another class of cases in which it would seem that action ought to be referred exclusively to the judicial tribunals, but in respect to which the prevailing doctrine seems to [* 110] be, that the legislature * has complete control unless specially restrained by the State constitution. The granting of divorces from the bonds of matrimony was not confided to the courts in England, and from the earliest days the Colonial and State legislatures in this country have assumed to possess the same power over the subject which was possessed by the Parliament, and

the clear and well-defined boundaries of judicial power." "Although it may be difficult, if not impossible, to lay down any general rule which may serve to determine, in all cases, whether the limits of constitutional restraint are overstepped by the exercise by one branch of the government of powers exclusively delegated to another, it certainly is practicable to apply to each case as it arises some test by which to ascertain whether this fundamental principle is violated. If, for example, the practical operation of a statute is to determine adversary suits pending between party and party, by substituting in place of the well-settled rules of law the arbitrary will of the legislature, and thereby controlling the action of the tribunal before which the suits are pending, no one can doubt that it would be an unauthorized act of legislation, because it directly infringes on the peculiar and appropriate functions of the judiciary. It is the exclusive province of the courts of justice to apply established principles to cases within their jurisdiction, and to enforce their jurisdiction by rendering judgments and executing them by suitable process. The legislature have no power to interfere with this jurisdiction in such manner as to change the decision of cases pending before courts, or to impair or set

aside their judgments, or to take cases out of the settled course of judicial proceeding. It is on this principle that it has been held, that the legislature have no power to grant a new trial or direct a rehearing of a cause which has been once judicially settled. The right to a review, or to try anew facts which have been determined by a verdict or decree, depends on fixed and well-settled principles, which it is the duty of the court to apply in the exercise of a sound judgment and discretion. These cannot be regulated or governed by legislative action. *Taylor v. Place*, 4 R. I. 324, 337; *Lewis v. Webb*, 3 Me. 326; *Dechastellux v. Fairchild*, 15 Penn. St 18. *A fortiori*, an act of the legislature cannot set aside or amend final judgments or decrees." The court further consider the general subject at length, and adjudge the particular enactment under consideration void, both as an exercise of judicial authority, and also because, in declaring valid the void proceedings in insolvency against the debtor, under which assignees had been appointed, it took away from the debtor his property, "not by due process of law or the law of the land, but by an arbitrary exercise of legislative will." See, further, *Griffin's Executor v. Cunningham*, 20 Grat. 109; *State v. Doherty*, 60 Me. 504.

from time to time they have passed special laws declaring a dissolution of the bonds of matrimony in special cases. Now it is clear that "the question of divorce involves investigations which are properly of a judicial nature, and the jurisdiction over divorces ought to be confined exclusively to the judicial tribunals, under the limitations to be prescribed by law;"¹ and so strong is the general conviction of this fact, that the people in framing their constitutions, in a majority of the States, have positively forbidden any such special laws.²

¹ 2 Kent, 106. See *Levins v. Sleator*, 2 Greene (Iowa), 607.

² The following are constitutional provisions:—*Alabama*: Divorces from the bonds of matrimony shall not be granted but in the cases by law provided for, and by suit in chancery; but decrees in chancery for divorce shall be final, unless appealed from in the manner prescribed by law, within three months from the date of the enrolment thereof. *Arkansas*: The General Assembly shall not have power to pass any bill of divorce, but may prescribe by law the manner in which such cases may be investigated in the courts of justice, and divorces granted. *California*: No divorce shall be granted by the legislature. The provision is the same or similar in Iowa, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Nebraska, Oregon. New Jersey, Texas, and Wisconsin. *Florida*: Divorces from the bonds of matrimony shall not be allowed but by the judgment of a court, as shall be prescribed by law. *Georgia*: The Superior Court shall have exclusive jurisdiction in all cases of divorce, both total and partial. *Illinois*: The General Assembly shall not pass . . . special laws . . . for granting divorces. *Kansas*: And power to grant divorces is vested in the District Courts subject to regulations by law. *Kentucky*: The General Assembly shall have no power to grant divorces, . . . but by general laws shall confer such

powers on the courts of justice. *Louisiana*: The legislature may enact general laws regulating the . . . granting of divorce; but no special laws shall be enacted relating to particular or individual cases. *Massachusetts*: All causes of marriage, divorce, and alimony . . . shall be heard and determined by the Governor and Council, until the legislature shall by law make other provision. *Mississippi*: Divorces from the bonds of matrimony shall not be granted but in cases provided for by law, and by suit in chancery. *New Hampshire*: All causes of marriage, divorce, and alimony . . . shall be heard and tried by the Superior Court, until the legislature shall by law make other provision. *New York*: . . . nor shall any divorce be granted otherwise than by due judicial proceedings. *North Carolina*: The General Assembly shall have power to pass general laws regulating divorce and alimony, but shall not have power to grant a divorce or secure alimony in any particular case. *Ohio*: The General Assembly shall grant no divorce, nor exercise any judicial power, not herein expressly conferred. *Pennsylvania*: The legislature shall not have power to enact laws annulling the contract of marriage in any case where by law the courts of this Commonwealth are, or hereafter may be, empowered to decree a divorce. *Tennessee*: The legislature shall have no power to grant divorces, but may authorize

[* 111] * Of the judicial decisions on the subject of legislative power over divorces there seem to be three classes of cases. The doctrine of the first class seems to be this: The granting of a divorce may be either a legislative or a judicial act, according as the legislature shall refer its consideration to the courts, or reserve it to itself. The legislature has the same full control over the *status* of husband and wife which it possesses over the other domestic relations, and may permit or prohibit it according to its own views of what is for the interest of the parties or the good of the public. In dissolving the relation, it proceeds upon such reasons as to it seem sufficient; and if inquiry is made into the facts of the past, it is no more than is needful when any change of the law is contemplated, with a view to the establishment of more salutary rules for the future. The inquiry, therefore, is not judicial in its nature, and it is not essential that there be any particular finding of misconduct or unfitness in the parties. As in other cases of legislative action, the reasons or the motives of the legislature cannot be inquired into; the relation which the law permitted before is now forbidden, and the parties are absolved from the obligations growing out of that relation which continued so long as the relation existed, but which necessarily cease with its termination. Marriage is not a contract, but a *status*; the parties cannot have vested

the courts of justice to grant them for such causes as may be specified by law; but such laws shall be general and uniform in their operation throughout the State. *Virginia*: The legislature shall confer on the courts the power to grant divorces, . . . but shall not by special legislation grant relief in such cases. *West Virginia*: The Circuit Courts shall have power under such general regulations as may be prescribed by law, to grant divorces, . . . but relief shall not be granted by special legislation in such cases. *Missouri*: The General Assembly shall not pass any local or special law . . . granting divorces. In Colorado the provision is the same. Under the Constitution of Michigan it was held that, as the legislature was prohibited from granting divorces, they could pass no special act authorizing the courts to divorce for a cause

which was not a legal cause for divorce under the general laws. *Teft v. Teft*, 3 Mich. 67. See also *Clark v. Clark*, 10 N. H. 387; *Simonds v. Simonds*, 103 Mass. 572; s. c. 4 Am. Rep. 576. The case of *White v. White*, 105 Mass. 325, was peculiar. A woman procured a divorce from her husband, and by the law then in force he was prohibited from marrying again except upon leave procured from the court. He did marry again, however, and the legislature passed a special act to affirm this marriage. In pursuance of a requirement of the constitution, jurisdiction of all cases of marriage and divorce had previously been vested by law in the courts. Held, that this took from the legislature all power to act upon the subject in special cases, and the attempt to validate the marriage was consequently ineffectual.

rights of property in a domestic relation ; therefore the legislative act does not come under condemnation as depriving parties of *rights contrary to the law of the land, but, as in other [* 112] cases within the scope of the legislative authority, the legislative will must be regarded as sufficient reason for the rule which it promulgates.¹

¹ The leading case on this subject is *Starr v. Pease*, 8 Conn. 541. On the question whether a divorce is necessarily a judicial act, the court say: "A further objection is urged against this act; viz., that by the new constitution of 1818, there is an entire separation of the legislative and judicial departments, and that the legislature can now pass no act or resolution not clearly warranted by that constitution; that the constitution is a grant of power, and not a limitation of powers already possessed; and, in short, that there is no reserved power in the legislature since the adoption of this constitution. Precisely the opposite of this is true. From the settlement of the State there have been certain fundamental rules by which power has been exercised. These rules were embodied in an instrument called by some a constitution, by others a charter. All agree that it was the first constitution ever made in Connecticut, and made, too, by the people themselves. It gave very extensive powers to the legislature, and left too much (for it left every thing almost) to their will. The constitution of 1818 proposed to, and in fact did, limit that will. It adopted certain general principles by a preamble called a Declaration of Rights; provided for the election and appointment of certain organs of the government, such as the legislative, executive, and judicial departments; and imposed upon them certain restraints. It found the State sovereign and independent, with a legislative power capable of making all laws necessary for the good of the people,

not forbidden by the Constitution of the United States, nor opposed to the sound maxims of legislation; and it left them in the same condition, except so far as limitations were provided. There is now and has been a law in force on the subject of divorces. The law was passed a hundred and thirty years ago. It provides for divorces *a vinculo matrimonii* in four cases; viz., adultery, fraudulent contract, wilful desertion, and seven years' absence unheard of. The law has remained in substance the same as it was when enacted in 1667. During all this period the legislature has interfered like the Parliament of Great Britain, and passed special acts of divorce *a vinculo matrimonii*; and at almost every session since the Constitution of the United States went into operation, now forty-two years, and for the thirteen years of the existence of the Constitution of Connecticut, such acts have been, in multiplied cases, passed and sanctioned by the constituted authorities of our State. We are not at liberty to inquire into the wisdom of our existing law upon this subject; nor into the expediency of such frequent interference of the legislature. We can only inquire into the constitutionality of the act under consideration. The power is not prohibited either by the Constitution of the United States or by that of this State. In view of the appalling consequences of declaring the general law of the State, or the repeated acts of our legislature, unconstitutional and void, consequences easily perceived, but not easily expressed, — such as bastardiz-

[* 113] * The second class of cases to which we have alluded hold that divorce is a judicial act in those cases upon which the general laws confer on the courts power to adjudicate; and that consequently in those cases the legislature cannot pass special laws, but its full control over the relation of marriage will leave it at liberty to grant divorces in other cases, for such causes as shall appear to its wisdom to justify them.¹

A third class of cases deny altogether the authority of these special legislative enactments, and declare the act of divorce to be in its nature judicial, and not properly within the province of the legislative power.² The most of these decisions, however, lay more or less stress upon clauses in the constitutions other than those which in general terms separate the legislative and judicial functions, and some of them would perhaps have been differently decided but for those other clauses. But it is safe to say, that the general sentiment in the legal profession is against the rightfulness of special legislative divorces; and it is believed that, if the question could originally have been considered by the courts, unembarrassed by any considerations of long acquiescence, and of the serious consequences which must result from affirming

ing the issue and subjecting the parties to punishment for adultery, — the court should come to the result only on a solemn conviction that their oaths of office and these constitutions imperiously demand it. Feeling myself no such conviction. I cannot pronounce the act void.” Per *Daggett*, J., *Hosmer*, Ch. J., and *Bissell*, J., concurring. *Peters*, J., dissented. Upon the same subject, see *Crane v. Meginnis*, 1 G. & J. 463; *Wright v. Wright*, 2 Md. 429; *Gaines v. Gaines*, 9 B. Monr. 295; *Cabell v. Cabell*, 1 Met. (Ky.) 319; *Dickson v. Dickson*, 1 Yerg. 110; *Melizet’s Appeal*, 17 Penn. St. 449; *Cronise v. Cronise*, 54 Penn. St. 255; *Adams v. Palmer*, 51 Me. 480; *Townsend v. Griffin*, 4 Harr. 440; *Noel v. Ewing*, 9 Ind. 37; and the examination of the whole subject by Mr. Bishop, in his work on Marriage and Divorce.

¹ *Levins v. Sleator*, 2 Greene (Iowa), 604; *Opinions of Judges*,

16 Me. 479; *Adams v. Palmer*, 51 Me. 480. See also *Townsend v. Griffin*, 4 Harr. 440. In a well-reasoned case in Kentucky, it was held that a legislative divorce obtained on the application of one of the parties while suit for divorce was pending in a court of competent jurisdiction, would not affect the rights to property of the other, growing out of the relation. *Gaines v. Gaines*, 9 B. Monr. 295.

² *Brigham v. Miller*, 17 Ohio, 445; *Clark v. Clark*, 10 N. H. 380; *Ponder v. Graham*, 4 Flor. 23; *State v. Fry*, 4 Mo. 120; *Bryson v. Campbell*, 12 Mo. 498; *Bryson v. Bryson*, 17 Mo. 590; *Same v. Same*, 44 Mo. 232. See also *Jones v. Jones*, 12 Penn. St. 353, 354. Under the Constitution of Massachusetts, the power of the legislature to grant divorces is denied. *Sparhawk v. Sparhawk*, 116 Mass. 315. See clause in constitution, *ante*, p. * 110, note.

their unlawfulness, after so many had been granted and new relations formed, it is highly probable that these enactments would have been held to be usurpations of judicial authority, and we should have been spared the necessity for the special constitutional provisions which have since been introduced. Fortunately these provisions render the question now discussed of little practical importance; at the same time that they refer the decision * upon applications for divorce to those tribunals [* 114] which must proceed upon inquiry, and cannot condemn without a hearing.¹

The force of a legislative divorce must in any case be confined to a dissolution of the relation; it can only be justified on the ground that it merely lays down a rule of conduct for the parties to observe towards each other for the future. It cannot inquire into the past, with a view to punish the parties for their offences against the marriage relation, except so far as the divorce itself can be regarded as a punishment. It cannot order the payment of alimony, for that would be a judgment;² it cannot adjudge upon conflicting claims to property between the parties, but it must leave all questions of this character to the courts. Those rights of property which depend upon the continued existence of the relation will be terminated by the dissolution, but only as in any other case rights in the future may be incidentally affected by a change in the law.³

¹ If marriage is a matter of right, then it would seem that any particular marriage that parties might lawfully form they must have a lawful right to continue in, unless by misbehavior they subject themselves to a forfeiture of the right. And if the legislature can annul the relation in one case, without any finding that a breach of the marriage contract has been committed, then it would seem that they might annul it in every case, and even prohibit all parties from entering into the same relation in the future. The recognition of a full and complete control of the relation in the legislature, to be exercised at its will, leads inevitably to this conclusion;

so that, under the "rightful powers of legislation" which our constitutions confer upon the legislative department, a relation essential to organized civil society might be abrogated entirely. Single legislative divorces are but single steps towards this barbarism which the application of the same principle to every individual case, by a general law, would necessarily bring upon us. See what is said by the Supreme Court of Missouri in *Bryson v. Bryson*, 17 Mo. 593, 594.

² *Crane v. Meginnis*, 1 G. & J. 463; *Potter's Dwarris on Statutes*, 486; *post*, p. * 405, note.

³ *Starr v. Pease*, 8 Conn. 545.

Legislative Encroachments upon Executive Power.

If it is difficult to point out the precise boundary which separates legislative from judicial duties, it is still more difficult to discriminate, in particular cases, between what is properly legislative and what is properly executive duty. The authority that makes the laws has large discretion in determining the means through which they shall be executed ; and the performance of * many duties which they may provide for by law, they may refer either to the chief executive of the State, or, at their option, to any other executive or ministerial officer, or even to a person specially named for the duty.¹ What can be definitely said on this subject is this: That such powers as are specially conferred by the constitution upon the governor, or upon any other specified officer, the legislature cannot require or authorize to be performed by any other officer or authority ; and from those duties which the constitution requires of him he cannot be excused by law.² But other powers or duties the executive

¹ This is affirmed in the recent case of *Bridges v. Shallcross*, 6 W. Va. 562. The constitution of that State provides that the governor shall nominate, and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate appoint, all officers whose offices are established by the constitution, or shall be created by law, and whose appointment or election is not otherwise provided for, and that no such officers shall be appointed or elected by the legislature. The court decided that this did not preclude the legislature from creating a board of public works of which the State officers should be *ex officio* the members. And see *State v. Covington*, 29 Ohio, N. S. 102.

² *Attorney-General v. Brown*, 1 Wis. 522. "Whatever power or duty is expressly given to, or imposed upon, the executive department, is altogether free from the interference of the other branches of the government. Especially is this the case

where the subject is committed to the discretion of the chief executive officer, either by the constitution or by the laws. So long as the power is vested in him, it is to be by him exercised, and no other branch of the government can control its exercise." Under the Constitution of Ohio, which forbids the exercise of any appointing power by the legislature, except as therein authorized, it was held that the legislature could not, by law, constitute certain designated persons a State board, with power to appoint commissioners of the State House, and directors of the penitentiary, and to remove such directors for cause. *State v. Kennon*, 7 Ohio, N. S. 546. And see *Davis v. State*, 7 Md. 161 ; also *Bridges v. Shallcross* and *State v. Covington*, referred to in preceding note. As to what are public officers, see *State v. Stanley*, 66 N. C. 59 ; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 488. An appointment to office was said, in *Taylor v. Commonwealth*, 3 J. J. Marsh. 404,

cannot exercise or assume except by legislative authority, and the power which in its discretion it confers it may also in its discretion withhold, or confide to other hands.¹ Whether in those cases where power is given by the constitution to the governor, the legislature have the same authority to make rules for the exercise of the power that they have to make rules to govern the proceedings in the courts, may perhaps be a question.² It

to be intrinsically an executive act. In a certain sense this is doubtless so, but it would not follow that the legislature could exercise no appointing power, or could confer none on others than the chief executive of the State. Where the constitution contains no negative words to limit the legislative authority in this regard, the legislature in enacting a law must decide for itself what are the suitable, convenient, or necessary agencies for its execution, and the authority of the executive must be limited to taking care that the law is executed by such agencies. See *Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 376.

Where the governor has power to remove an officer for neglect of duty, he is the sole judge whether the duty has been neglected. *State v. Doherty*, 25 La. Ann. 119; s. c. 13 Am. Rep. 131. See, as to discretionary powers, *ante*, p. *41, note.

The executive, it has been decided, has power to pardon for contempt of court. *State v. Sauvinet*, 24 La. Ann. 119; s. c. 13 Am. Rep. 115. A general power to pardon may be exercised before as well as after conviction.

• *Lapeyre v. United States*, 17 Wall. 191; *Dominick v. Bowdoin*, 44 Geo. 457; *Grubb v. Bullock*, 44 Geo. 379. The President's power to pardon does not extend to the restoration of property which has been judicially forfeited. *Knote v. United States*, (Ct. of Cl.) 14 Am. Law Reg. n. s. 369; *Osborn v. United States*, 91 U. S. Rep. 474. The pardon may be granted by general proclamation. *Carlisle v. United States*, 16 Wall.

147; *Lapeyre v. United States*, 17 Wall. 191. One receiving a full pardon from the President cannot afterwards be required by law to establish loyalty as a condition to the assertion of legal rights. *Carlisle v. United States*, 16 Wall. 147.

¹ "In deciding this question [as to the authority of the governor], recurrence must be had to the constitution. That furnishes the only rule by which the court can be governed. That is the charter of the governor's authority. All the powers delegated to him by or in accordance with that instrument, he is entitled to exercise, and no others. The constitution is a limitation upon the powers of the legislative department of the government, but it is to be regarded as a grant of powers to the other departments. Neither the executive nor the judiciary, therefore, can exercise any authority or power except such as is clearly granted by the constitution." *Field v. People*, 2 Scam. 80.

² Whether the legislature can constitutionally remit a fine, when the pardoning power is vested in the governor by the constitution, has been made a question; and the cases of *Haley v. Clarke*, 26 Ala. 439, and *People v. Bircham*, 12 Cal. 50, are opposed to each other upon the point. If the fine is payable to the State, perhaps the legislature should be considered as having the same right to discharge it that they would have to release any other debtor to the State from his obligation. In *Morgan v. Buffington*, 21 Mo. 549, it was held

[* 116] would seem * that this must depend generally upon the nature of the power, and upon the question whether the constitution, in conferring it, has furnished a sufficient rule for its exercise. Where complete power to pardon is conferred upon the executive, it may be doubted if the legislature can impose restrictions under the name of rules or regulations; but where the governor is made commander-in-chief of the military forces of the State, it is obvious that his authority must be exercised under such proper rules as the legislature may prescribe, because the military forces are themselves under the control of the legislature, and military law is prescribed by that department. There would be this clear limitation upon the power of the legislature to prescribe rules for the executive department; that they must not be such as, under pretence of regulation, divest the executive of, or preclude his exercising, any of his constitutional prerog-

that the State auditor was not obliged to accept as conclusive the certificate from the Speaker of the House as to the sum due a member of the House for attendance upon it, but that he might lawfully inquire whether the amount had been actually earned by attendance or not. The legislative rule, therefore, cannot go to the extent of compelling an executive officer to do something else than his duty, under any pretence of regulation. The power to pardon offenders is vested by the several State constitutions in the governor. It is not, however, a power which necessarily inheres in the executive. *State v. Dunning*, 9 Ind. 22. And several of the State constitutions have provided that it shall be exercised under such regulations as shall be prescribed by law. There are provisions more or less broad to this purport in those of Kansas, Florida, Alabama, Arkansas, Texas, Mississippi, Oregon, Indiana, Iowa, and Virginia. In *State v. Dunning*, 9 Ind. 20, an act of the legislature requiring the applicant for the remission of a fine or forfeiture to forward to the governor, with his application, the opinion of

certain county officers as to the propriety of the remission, was sustained as an act within the power conferred by the constitution upon the legislature to prescribe regulations in these cases. And see *Branham v. Lange*, 16 Ind. 500. The power to reprieve is not included in the power to pardon. *Ex parte Howard*, 17 N. H. 545. It has been decided that to give parties who have been convicted and fined the benefit of the insolvent laws is not an exercise of the pardoning power. *Ex parte Scott*, 19 Ohio, N. S. 581. And where the constitution provided that "In all criminal and penal cases, except those of treason and impeachment, [the governor] shall have power to grant pardons after conviction, and remit fines and forfeitures," &c., it was held that this did not preclude the legislature from passing an act of pardon and amnesty for parties liable to prosecution, but not yet convicted. *State v. Nichols*, 26 Ark. 74; S. C. 7 Am. Rep. 600. Pardons may be made conditional, and forfeited if the condition is not observed. *State v. Smith*, 1 Bailey, 283; *Lee v. Murphy*, 22 Gratt. 789.

atives or powers. Those matters which the constitution specifically confides to him the legislature cannot directly or indirectly take from his control.

It may be proper to say here, that the executive, in the proper discharge of his duties under the constitution, is as independent of the courts as he is of the legislature.¹

Delegating Legislative Power.

One of the settled maxims in constitutional law is, that the power conferred upon the legislature to make laws cannot be delegated by that department to any other body or authority. Where the sovereign power of the State has located the authority, there it must remain; and by the constitutional agency alone * the laws must be made until the constitution [* 117] itself is changed. The power to whose judgment, wisdom, and patriotism this high prerogative has been intrusted cannot relieve itself of the responsibility by choosing other agencies upon which the power shall be devolved, nor can it substitute the judgment, wisdom, and patriotism of any other body for those to which alone the people have seen fit to confide this sovereign trust.²

¹ It has been a disputed question whether the writ of *mandamus* will lie to compel the performance of executive duties. In the following cases the power has either been expressly affirmed, or it has been exercised without being questioned. *State v. Moffitt*, 5 Ohio, 358; *State v. Governor*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 529; *Coltin v. Ellis*, 7 Jones, 545; *Chamberlain v. Sibley*, 4 Minn. 309; *Magruder v. Governor*, 25 Md. 173; *Groove v. Gwinn*, 43 Md. 572; *Tennessee, &c. R. R. Co. v. Moore*, 36 Ala. 371; *Middleton v. Lowe*, 30 Cal. 596; *Harpending v. Haight*, 39 Cal. 189; s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 432; *Chumasero v. Potts*, 2 Montana, 242. In the following cases the power has been denied: *Hawkins v. Governor*, 1 Ark. 570; *Low v. Towns*, 8 Geo. 360; *State v. Kirkwood*, 14 Iowa, 162; *Dennett, Petitioner*, 32 Me. 510; *People v. Bissell*,

19 Ill. 229; *People v. Gates*, 40 Ill. 126; *State v. Governor*, 25 N. J. 331; *Mauran v. Smith*, 8 R. I. 192; *State v. Warmoth*, 22 La. Ann. 1; s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 712; *Same v. Same*, 24 La. Ann. 351; s. c. 13 Am. Rep. 126; *People v. Governor*, 29 Mich. 320; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 89; *State v. Governor*, 39 Mo. 388.

² "These are the bounds which the trust that is put in them by the society, and the law of God and nature, have set to the legislative power of every Commonwealth, in all forms of government:—

"*First*. They are to govern by promulgated established laws, not to be varied in particular cases, but to have one rule for rich and poor, for the favorite at court and the countryman at plough.

"*Secondly*. These laws also ought to be designed for no other end

But it is not always essential that a legislative act should be a completed statute which must in any event take effect as law, at the time it leaves the hands of the legislative department. A statute may be *conditional*, and its taking effect may be made to depend upon some subsequent event.¹ Affirmative legislation may in some cases be adopted, of which the parties interested are at liberty to avail themselves or not at their option. A private act of incorporation cannot be forced upon the corporators; they may refuse the franchise if they so choose.² In these [*118] cases the legislative act is regarded as complete when it has passed through the constitutional formalities necessary

ultimately but the good of the people.

“*Thirdly.* They must not raise taxes on the property of the people without the consent of the people, given by themselves or their deputies. And this properly concerns only such governments where the legislative is always in being, or at least where the people have not reserved any part of the legislative to deputies, to be from time to time chosen by themselves.

“*Fourthly.* The legislative neither must nor can transfer the power of making laws to anybody else, or place it anywhere but where the people have.” Locke on Civil Government, § 142.

That legislative power cannot be delegated, see *Thorne v. Cramer*, 15 Barb. 112; *Bradley v. Baxter*, 15 Barb. 122; *Barto v. Himrod*, 8 N. Y. 483; *People v. Stout*, 23 Barb. 349; *Rice v. Foster*, 4 Harr. 479; *Santo v. State*, 2 Iowa, 165; *Geebrick v. State*, 5 Iowa, 491; *State v. Beneke*, 9 Iowa, 203; *State v. Weir*, 33 Iowa, 184; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 115; *People v. Collins*, 3 Mich. 343; *Railroad Company v. Commissioners of Clinton County*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 77; *Parker v. Commonwealth*, 6 Penn. St. 507; *Commonwealth v. McWilliams*, 11 Penn. St. 61; *Maize v. State*, 4 Ind. 342; *Meshmeier v. State*, 11 Ind. 482; *State v. Parker*, 26 Vt. 362; *State v.*

Swisher, 17 Tex. 441; *State v. Copeland*, 8 R. I. 33; *State v. Wilcox*, 45 Mo. 458; *Commonwealth v. Locke*, 72 Penn. St. 491; *Ex parte Wall*, 48 Cal. 279; *Willis v. Owen*, 43 Tex. 41; *Farnsworth v. Lisbon*, 62 Me. 451; *Brewer v. Brewer*, 62 Me. 62; *State v. Hudson County*, 87 N. J. 12.

¹ *Brig Aurora v. United States*, 7 Cranch, 382; *Bull v. Read*, 13 Grat. 78; *State v. Parker*, 26 Vt. 357; *Peck v. Weddell*, 17 Ohio, n. s. 271; *State v. Kirkley*, 29 Md. 85; *Walton v. Greenwood*, 60 Me. 356; *Baltimore v. Clunet*, 23 Md. 449. It is not a delegation of legislative power to make the repeal of a charter depend upon the failure of the corporation to make up a deficiency which is to be ascertained and determined by a tribunal provided by the repealing act. *Lothrop v. Stedman*, 42 Conn. 588. See *Crease v. Babcock*, 23 Pick. 384, 344. Nor to refer the question of extending municipal boundaries to a court where issues may be formed and disputed facts tried. *Burlington v. Leebrick*, 43 Iowa, 252. It is competent to make an act take effect on condition that those applying for it shall erect a station at a place named. *State v. New Haven, &c. Co.*, 43 Conn. 351.

² Angell and Ames on Corp. § 81.

to perfected legislation, notwithstanding its actually going into operation as law may depend upon its subsequent acceptance. We have elsewhere spoken of municipal corporations, and of the powers of legislation which may be and commonly are bestowed upon them, and the bestowal of which is not to be considered as trenching upon the maxim that legislative power is not to be delegated, since that maxim is to be understood in the light of the immemorial practice of this country and of England, which has always recognized the propriety of vesting in the municipal organizations certain powers of local regulation, in respect to which the parties immediately interested may fairly be supposed more competent to judge of their needs than any central authority. As municipal organizations are mere auxiliaries of the State government in the important business of municipal rule, the legislature may create them at will from its own views of propriety or necessity, and without consulting the parties interested; and it also possesses the like power to abolish them, without stopping to inquire what may be the desire of the corporators on that subject.¹

Nevertheless, as the corporators have a special and peculiar interest in the terms and conditions of the charter, in the powers conferred and liabilities imposed, as well as in the general question whether they shall originally be or afterwards remain incorporated at all or not, and as the burdens of municipal government must rest upon their shoulders, and especially as by becoming incorporated they are held, in law, to undertake to discharge the duties the charter imposes, it seems eminently proper that their voice should be heard on the question of their incorporation, and that their decision should be conclusive, unless, for strong reasons of State policy or local necessity, it should seem important for the State to overrule the opinion of the local majority. The right to refer any legislation of this character to the people peculiarly interested does not seem to be questioned, and the reference is by no means unusual.²

¹ *City of Patterson v. Society, &c.*, 24 N. J. 385; *Cheany v. Hooser*, 9 B. Monr. 330; *Berlin v. Gorham*, 34 N. H. 266. The question of a levee tax may lawfully be referred to the voters of the district of territory over which it is proposed to spread the tax,

regardless of municipal divisions. *Alcorn v. Hamer*, 38 Miss. 652. And see, in general, Angell and Ames on Corp., § 31 and note; also *post*, pp. *190—*192.

² *Bull v. Read*, 13 Grat. 78; *Corning v. Greene*, 28 Barb. 83; *Morford*

[* 119] * For the like reasons the question whether a county or township shall be divided and a new one formed,¹ or two townships or school districts formerly one be reunited,² or a city charter be revised,³ or a county seat located at a particular place, or after its location removed elsewhere,⁴ or the municipality contract particular debts, or engage in a particular improvement,⁵ is

v. Unger, 8 Iowa, 82; *City of Patterson v. Society, &c.*, 24 N. J. 385; *Gorham v. Springfield*, 21 Me. 58; *Commonwealth v. Judges of Quarter Sessions*, 8 Penn. St. 391; *Commonwealth v. Painter*, 10 Penn. St. 214; *Call v. Chadbourne*, 46 Me. 206; *State v. Scott*, 17 Mo. 521; *State v. Wilcox*, 45 Mo. 458; *Hobart v. Supervisors, &c.*, 17 Cal. 23; *Bank of Chenango v. Brown*, 26 N. Y. 467; *Steward v. Jefferson*, 3 Harr. 335; *Burgess v. Pue*, 2 Gill, 11; *Lafayette, &c. R. R. Co. v. Geiger*, 34 Ind. 185. The right to refer to the people of several municipalities the question of their consolidation was disputed in *Smith v. McCarthy*, 56 Penn. St. 359, but sustained by the court. And see *Smyth v. Titcomb*, 31 Me. 272; *Erlinger v. Boneau*, 51 Ill. 94; *Lammert v. Lidwell*, 62 Mo. 188; *State v. Wilcox*, 45 Mo. 458; *Brunswick v. Finney*, 54 Geo. 317; *Response to House Resolution*, 55 Mo. 295.

¹ *State v. Reynolds*, 5 Gilm. 1. See *State v. McNiell*, 24 Wis. 149. *Response to House Resolution*, 55 Mo. 295. For other cases on the same general subject, see *People v. Nally*, 49 Cal. 478; *Pike County v. Barnes*, 51 Miss. 305; *Brunswick v. Finney*, 54 Geo. 317. The question whether a general school law shall be accepted in a particular municipality may be referred to its voters. *State v. Wilcox*, 45 Mo. 458.

² *Commonwealth v. Judges, &c.*, 8 Penn. St. 391; *Call v. Chadbourne*, 46 Me. 206; *People v. Nally*, 49 Cal. 478; *Erlinger v. Boneau*, 51 Ill. 94.

³ *Brunswick v. Finney*, 54 Geo. 317.

⁴ *Commonwealth v. Painter*, 10

Penn. St. 214. See *People v. Solomon*, 51 Ill. 37; *Slinger v. Henneman*, 38 Wis. 504; *post*, pp. * 124—* 125.

⁵ There are many cases in which municipal subscriptions to works of internal improvement, under statutes empowering them to be made, have been sustained; among others, *Goddin v. Crump*, 8 Leigh, 120; *Bridgeport v. Housatonic Railroad Co.*, 15 Conn. 475; *Starin v. Genoa*, 29 Barb. 442, and 23 N. Y. 439; *Bank of Rome v. Village of Rome*, 18 N. Y. 38; *Prettyman v. Supervisors, &c.*, 19 Ill. 406; *Robertson v. Rockford*, 21 Ill. 451; *Johnson v. Stack*, 24 Ill. 75; *Bushnell v. Beloit*, 10 Wis. 195; *Clark v. Janesville*, 10 Wis. 136; *Stein v. Mobile*, 24 Ala. 591; *Mayor of Wetumpka v. Winter*, 29 Ala. 651; *Pattison v. Yuba*, 13 Cal. 175; *Blanding v. Burr*, 13 Cal. 343; *Hobart v. Supervisors, &c.*, 17 Cal. 23; *Taylor v. Newberne*, 2 Jones Eq. 141; *Caldwell v. Justices of Burke*, 4 Jones Eq. 323; *Louisville, &c. Railroad Co. v. Davidson*, 1 Sneed, 637; *Nichol v. Mayor of Nashville*, 9 Humph. 252; *Railroad Co. v. Commissioners of Clinton Co.*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 77; *Trustees of Paris v. Cherry*, 8 Ohio, n. s. 564; *Cass v. Dillon*, 2 Ohio, n. s. 607; *State v. Commissioners of Clinton Co.*, 6 Ohio, n. s. 280; *State v. Van Horne*, 7 Ohio, n. s. 327; *State v. Trustees of Union*, 8 Ohio, n. s. 394; *Trustees, &c. v. Shoemaker*, 12 Ohio, n. s. 624; *State v. Commissioners of Hancock*, 12 Ohio, n. s. 596; *Powers v. Dougherty Co.*, 23 Geo. 65; *San Antonio v. Jones*, 28 Texas, 19; *Commonwealth v. McWilliams*, 11 Penn. St. 61; *Sharpless v. Mayor, &c.*

always a question which may with propriety be referred to the voters of the municipality for decision.

The question then arises, whether that which may be done in *reference to any municipal organization within [* 120] the State may not also be done in reference to the State at large? May not any law framed for the State at large be made conditional on an acceptance by the people at large, declared through the ballot-box? If it is not unconstitutional to delegate to a single locality the power to decide whether it will be governed by a particular charter, must it not quite as clearly be within the power of the legislature to refer to the people at large, from whom all power is derived, the decision upon any proposed statute affecting the whole State? And can that be called a delegation of power which consists only in the agent or trustee referring back to the principal the final decision in a case where the principal is the party concerned, and where perhaps there are questions of policy and propriety involved which no authority can decide so satisfactorily and so conclusively as the principal to whom they are referred?

If the decision of these questions is to depend upon the weight of judicial authority up to the present time, it must be held that there is no power to refer the adoption or rejection of a general law to the people of the State, any more than there is to refer it to any other authority. The prevailing doctrine in the courts appears to be, that, except in those cases where, by the constitution, the

21 Penn. St. 147; *Moers v. Reading*, 21 Penn. St. 188; *Talbot v. Dent*, 9 B. Monr. 526; *Slack v. Railroad Co.*, 13 B. Monr. 1; *City of St. Louis v. Alexander*, 23 Mo. 483; *City of Aurora v. West*, 9 Ind. 74; *Cotton v. Commissioners of Leon*, 6 Fla. 610; *Copes v. Charleston*, 10 Rich. 491; *Commissioners of Knox County v. Aspinwall*, 21 How. 539, and 24 How. 326; *Same v. Wallace*, 21 How. 547; *Zabriske v. Railroad Co.*, 23 How. 381; *Amey v. Mayor, &c.*, 24 How. 365; *Gelpecke v. Dubuque*, 1 Wall. 175; *Thompson v. Lee County*, 3 Wall. 327; *Rogers v. Burlington*, 3 Wall. 654; *Gibbons v. Mobile & Great Northern Railroad Co.*, 36 Ala. 410; *St. Joseph, &c. Railroad Co. v. Buchanan Co. Court*, 39 Mo. 485; *State v. Linn Co. Court*, 44 Mo. 504; *Stewart v. Supervisors of Polk Co.*, 30 Iowa, 9; *John v. C. R. & F. W. R. R. Co.*, 35 Ind. 539; *Leavenworth County v. Miller*, 7 Kan. 479; *Walker v. Cincinnati*, 21 Ohio, n. s. 14; *Ex parte Selma, &c. R. R. Co.*, 45 Ala. 696; *S. & V. R. R. Co. v. Stockton*, 41 Cal. 149. In several of them the power to authorize the municipalities to decide upon such subscriptions has been contested as a delegation of legislative authority, but the courts—even those which hold the subscriptions void on other grounds—do not look upon these cases as being obnoxious to the constitutional principle referred to in the text.

people have expressly reserved to themselves a power of decision, the function of legislation cannot be exercised by them, even to the extent of accepting or rejecting a law which has been framed for their consideration. "The exercise of this power by the people in other cases is not expressly and in terms prohibited by the constitution, but it is forbidden by necessary and unavoidable implication. The Senate and Assembly are the only bodies of men clothed with the power of general legislation. They possess the entire power, with the exception above stated. The people reserved no part of it to themselves [with that exception], and can therefore exercise it in no other case." It is therefore held that the legislature have no power to submit a proposed law to the people, nor have the people power to bind each other by acting upon it. They voluntarily surrendered that power when they adopted the constitution. The government of the State is democratic, but it is a representative democracy, and in passing general laws the people act only through their representatives in the legislature.¹

[*121] *Nor, it seems, can such legislation be sustained as legislation of a conditional character, whose force is to depend upon the happening of some future event, or upon some future change of circumstances. "The event or change of circumstances on which a law may be made to take effect must be such as, in the judgment of the legislature, affects the question of the

¹ Per *Ruggles*, Ch. J., in *Barto v. Himrod*, 8 N. Y. 489. It is worthy of consideration, however, whether there is any thing in the reference of a statute to the people for acceptance or rejection which is inconsistent with the representative system of government. To refer it to the people to frame and agree upon a statute for themselves would be equally impracticable and inconsistent with the representative system; but to take the opinion of the people upon a bill already framed by representatives and submitted to them, is not only practicable, but is in precise accordance with the mode in which the constitution of the State is adopted, and with the action which is taken in

many other cases. The representative in these cases has fulfilled precisely those functions which the people as a democracy could not fulfil; and where the case has reached a stage when the body of the people can act without confusion, the representative has stepped aside to allow their opinion to be expressed. The legislature is not attempting in such a case to delegate its authority to a new agency, but the trustee, vested with a large discretionary authority, is taking the opinion of the principal upon the necessity, policy, or propriety of an act which is to govern the principal himself. See *Smith v. Janesville*, 26 Wis. 291; *Fell v. State*, 42 Md. 71; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 83.

expediency of the law ; an event on which the expediency of the law in the opinion of the law-makers depends. On this question of expediency, the legislature must exercise its own judgment definitively and finally. When a law is made to take effect upon the happening of such an event, the legislature in effect declare the law inexpedient if the event should not happen, but expedient if it should happen. They appeal to no other man or men to judge for them in relation to its present or future expediency. They exercise that power themselves, and then perform the duty which the constitution imposes upon them." But it was held that in the case of the submission of a proposed free-school law to the people, no such event or change of circumstances affecting the expediency of the law was expected to happen. The wisdom or expediency of the School Act, abstractly considered, did not depend on the vote of the people. If it was unwise or inexpedient before that vote was taken, it was equally so afterwards. The event on which the act was to take effect was nothing else than the vote of the people on the identical question which the constitution makes it the duty of the legislature itself to decide. The legislature has no power to make a statute dependent on such a * contingency, because it would be confiding to others [* 122] that legislative discretion which they are bound to exercise themselves, and which they cannot delegate or commit to any other man or men to be exercised.¹

¹ Per *Ruggles*, Ch. J., in *Barto v. Himrod*, 8 N. Y. 490. And see *Santo v. State*, 2 Iowa, 165; *State v. Beneke*, 9 Iowa, 203; *State v. Swisher*, 17 Tex. 441; *State v. Field*, 17 Mo. 529; *Bank of Chenango v. Brown*, 26 N. Y. 470; *People v. Stout*, 23 Barb. 349; *State v. Wilcox*, 45 Mo. 458; *Ex parte Wall*, 48 Cal. 279, 313; *Brown v. Fleischer*, 4 Oreg. 132. But upon this point there is great force in what is said by *Redfield*, Ch. J., in *State v. Parker*, 26 Vt. 357: "If the operation of a law may fairly be made to depend upon a future contingency, then, in my apprehension, it makes no essential difference what is the nature of the contingency, so it be an equal and fair one, a moral and legal one,

not opposed to sound policy, and so far connected with the object and purpose of the statute as not to be a mere idle and arbitrary one. And to us the contingency, upon which the present statute was to be suspended until another legislature should meet and have opportunity of reconsidering it, was not only proper and legal, and just and moral, but highly commendable and creditable to the legislature who passed the statute; for at the very threshold of inquiry into the expediency of such a law lies the other and more important inquiry, Are the people prepared for such a law? Can it be successfully enforced? These questions being answered in the affirmative, he must be a bold man who would even vote against the

[* 123] * The same reasons which preclude the original enactment of a law from being referred to the people would

law; and something more must be who would, after it had been passed with that assurance, be willing to embarrass its operation or rejoice at its defeat.

“After a full examination of the arguments by which it is attempted to be sustained that statutes made dependent upon such contingencies are not valid laws, and a good deal of study and reflection, I must declare that I am fully convinced — although at first, without much examination, somewhat inclined to the same opinion — that the opinion is the result of false analogies, and so founded upon a latent fallacy. It seems to me that the distinction attempted between the contingency of a popular vote and other future contingencies is without all just foundation in sound policy or sound reasoning, and that it has too often been made more from necessity than choice, — rather to escape from an overwhelming analogy than from any obvious difference in principle in the two classes of cases; for . . . one may find any number of cases in the legislation of Congress, where statutes have been made dependent upon the shifting character of the revenue laws, or the navigation laws, or commercial rules, edicts, or restrictions of other countries. In some, perhaps, these laws are made by representative bodies, or, it may be, by the people of these States, and in others by the lords of the treasury, or the boards of trade, or by the proclamation of the sovereign; and in all these cases no question can be made of the perfect legality of our acts of Congress being made dependent upon such contingencies. It is, in fact, the only possible mode of meeting them, unless Congress is kept constantly in session. The same is true of acts of Congress by which power is vested in

the President to levy troops or draw money from the public treasury, upon the contingency of a declaration or an act of war committed by some foreign state, empire, kingdom, prince, or potentate. If these illustrations are not sufficient to show the fallacy of the argument, more would not avail.” See also *State v. Noyes*, 10 Fost. 292; *Bull v. Read*, 13 Grat. 78; *Johnson v. Rich*, 9 Barb. 680; *State v. Reynolds*, 5 Gilm. 1; *Robinson v. Bidwell*, 22 Cal. 349. In the recent case of *Smith v. Janesville*, 26 Wis. 291, Chief Justice Dixon discusses this subject in the following language: “But it is said that the act is void, or at least so much of it as pertains to the taxation of shares in national banks, because it was submitted to a vote of the people, or provided that it should take effect only after approval by a majority of the electors voting on the subject at the next general election. This was no more than providing that the act should take effect on the happening of a certain future contingency, that contingency being a popular vote in its favor. No one doubts the general power of the legislature to make such regulations and conditions as it pleases with regard to the taking effect or operation of laws. They may be absolute, or conditional and contingent; and if the latter, they may take effect on the happening of any event which is future and uncertain. Instances of this kind of legislation are not unfrequent. The law of Congress suspending the writ of *habeas corpus* during the late rebellion is one, and several others are referred to in the case *In re Richard Oliver*, 17 Wis. 681. It being conceded that the legislature possesses this general power, the only question here would seem to be, whether a vote of the people in favor of a law is to

render it equally incompetent to refer to their decision the question, whether an existing law should be repealed. If the one is "a plain surrender to the people of the law-making power," so also is the other.¹ It would seem, however, that if a legislative act is, by its terms, to take effect in any contingency, it is not unconstitutional to make the *time* when it shall take effect depend upon the event of a popular vote being for or against it, — the time of its going into operation being postponed to a later day in the latter contingency.² It would also seem that if the question of the acceptance or rejection of a municipal charter can be referred to the voters of the locality specially interested, it would be equally competent to refer to them the question whether a State law establishing a particular police regulation should be of force in such locality or not. Municipal charters refer most

be excluded from the number of those future contingent events upon which it may be provided that it shall take effect. A similar question was before this court in a late case (*State ex rel. Attorney-General v. O'Neill, Mayor, &c.*, 24 Wis. 149), and was very elaborately discussed. We came unanimously to the conclusion in that case that a provision for a vote of the electors of the city of Milwaukee in favor of an act of the legislature, before it should take effect, was a lawful contingency, and that the act was valid. That was a law affecting the people of Milwaukee particularly, while this was one affecting the people of the whole State. There the law was submitted to the voters of that city, and here it was submitted to those of the State at large. What is the difference between the two cases? It is manifest, on principle, that there cannot be any. The whole reasoning of that case goes to show that this act must be valid, and so it has been held in the best-considered cases, as will be seen by reference to that opinion. We are constrained to hold, therefore, that this act is and was in all respects valid from the time it took effect, in November, 1866; and consequently that there was no want

of authority for the levy and collection of the taxes in question." This decision, though opposed to many others, appears to us entirely sound and reasonable.

¹ *Geebrick v. State*, 5 Iowa, 491; *Rice v. Foster*, 4 Harr. 492; *Parker v. Commonwealth*, 6 Penn. St. 507. The case in 5 Iowa was followed in *State v. Weir*, 33 Iowa, 134; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 115.

² *State v. Parker*, 26 Vt. 357. The act under consideration in that case was, by its terms, to take effect on the second Tuesday of March after its passage, unless the people to whose votes it was submitted, should declare against it, in which case it should take effect in the following December. The case was distinguished from *Barto v. Himrod*, 8 N. Y. 483, and the act sustained. At the same time the court express their dissent from the reasoning upon which the New York case rests. In *People v. Collins*, 3 Mich. 343, the court was equally divided in a case similar to that in Vermont, except that in the Michigan case the law which was passed and submitted to the people in 1853 was not to go into effect until 1870, if the vote of the people was against it.

questions of local government, including police regulations, to the local authorities; on the supposition that they are better able to decide for themselves upon the needs, as well as the sentiments, of their constituents, than the legislature possibly can be, and are therefore more competent to judge what local regulations are important, and also how far the local sentiment will assist in their enforcement. The same reasons would apply in favor of permitting the people of the locality to accept or reject for themselves a particular police regulation, since this is only allowing them less extensive powers of local government than a municipal charter

would confer; and the fact that the rule of law on that sub-
[* 124] ject might be different in different * localities, according as the people accepted or rejected the regulation, would not seem to affect the principle, when the same result is brought about by the different regulations which municipal corporations establish for themselves in the exercise of an undisputed authority.¹ It is not to be denied, however, that there is considerable authority against the right of legislative delegation in these cases.

The legislature of Delaware, in 1847, passed an act to authorize the citizens of the several counties of the State to decide by ballot whether the license to retail intoxicating liquors should be per-

¹ In New Hampshire an act was passed declaring bowling-alleys, situate within twenty-five rods of a dwelling-house, nuisances, but the statute was to be in force only in those towns in which it should be adopted in town meeting. In *State v. Noyes*, 10 Fost. 293, this act was held to be constitutional. "Assuming," say the court, "that the legislature has the right to confer the power of local regulation upon cities and towns, that is, the power to pass ordinances and by-laws, in such terms and with such provisions, in the classes of cases to which the power extends, as they may think proper, it seems to us hardly possible seriously to contend that the legislature may not confer the power to adopt within such municipality a law drawn up and framed by themselves. If they may pass a law authorizing towns to make ordinances to punish the keeping of

billiard-rooms, bowling-alleys, and other places of gambling, they may surely pass laws to punish the same acts, subject to be adopted by the town before they can be of force in it." And it seems to us difficult to answer this reasoning, if it be confined to such laws as fall within the proper province of local government, and which are therefore usually referred to the judgment of the municipal authorities or their constituency. A similar question arose in *Smith v. Village of Adrian*, 1 Mich. 495, but was not decided. In *Bank of Cheungo v. Brown*, 26 N. Y. 467, it was held competent to authorize the electors of an incorporated village to determine for themselves what sections of the general act for the incorporation of villages should apply to their village. See, further, *People v. Solomon*, 51 Ill. 37; *Burgess v. Pue*, 2 Gill, 11; *Hammond v. Haines*, 25 Md. 541.

mitted. By this act a general election was to be held; and if a majority of votes in any county should be cast against license, it should not thereafter be lawful for any person to retail intoxicating liquors within such county; but if the majority should be cast in favor of license, then licenses might be granted in the county so voting, in the manner and under the regulations in said act prescribed. The Court of Errors and Appeals of that State held this act void, as an attempted delegation of the trust to make laws, and upon the same reasons which support the cases before cited, where acts have been held void which referred to the people of the State for approval a law of general application.¹ The same decision was made near the same time by the Supreme * Court of Pennsylvania,² followed afterwards in an elaborate opinion by the Supreme Court of Iowa.³ But the case in Pennsylvania has since been overruled.⁴

By statute in Indiana it was enacted that no person should retail spirituous liquors, except for sacramental, mechanical, chemical, medicinal, or culinary purposes, without the consent of the majority of the legal voters of the proper township who might cast their votes for license at the April election, nor without filing with the county auditor a bond as therein provided; upon the filing of which the auditor was to issue to the person filing the same a license to retail spirituous liquors, which was to be good for one year from the day of the election. This act was held void upon similar reasons to those above quoted.⁵ This case follows the previous decisions in Pennsylvania and Delaware,⁶ and it has since

¹ *Rice v. Foster*, 4 Harr. 479. Compare this with the recent case of *Commonwealth v. Bennett*, 108 Mass. 27, which is *contra*, and which is placed upon what seems to us the impregnable grounds, that "the subject, although not embraced within the ordinary power to make by-laws and ordinances, falls within the class of police regulations which may be intrusted by the legislature by express enactment to municipal authority." See also *Bancroft v. Dumas*, 21 Vt. 456. A local option law concerning the running at large of beasts has recently been held unconstitutional in Missouri. *Lammert v. Lidwell*, 62 Mo. 188.

² *Parker v. Commonwealth*, 6 Penn. St. 507.

³ *Geebrick v. State*, 5 Iowa, 495. See *State v. Wier*, 33 Iowa, 134; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 115.

⁴ *Locke's Appeal*, 72 Penn. St. 491; s. c. 13 Am. Rep. 716.

⁵ *Maize v. State*, 4 Ind. 342. Compare *Groesch v. State*, 42 Ind. 547, 558.

⁶ *Parker v. Commonwealth*, 6 Penn. St. 507; *Rice v. Foster*, 4 Harr. 479. See also *State v. Field*, 17 Mo. 529; *Commonwealth v. McWilliams*, 11 Penn. St. 61; *State v. Copeland*, 3 R. I. 33; *Ex parte Wall*, 48 Cal. 279.

been followed by another decision of the Supreme Court of that State, except that while in the first case only that portion of the statute which provided for submission to the people was held void, in the later case that unconstitutional provision was held to affect the whole statute with infirmity, and render the whole invalid.¹ But we think that at this time the clear weight of authority is in support of legislation of this nature commonly known as local option laws.²

Irrepealable Laws.

Similar reasons to those which forbid the legislative department of the State from delegating its authority will also forbid its passing any irrepealable law. The constitution, in conferring the legislative authority, has prescribed to its exercise any limitations which the people saw fit to impose; and no other power than the people can superadd other limitations. To say that the legislature may pass irrepealable laws, is to say that it may alter the very constitution from which it derives its authority; since, in so far as one legislature could bind a subsequent one by its enactments, it could in the same degree reduce the legislative power of its successors; and the process might be repeated, until, one by one, the subjects of legislation would be excluded altogether from their control, and the constitutional provision, that the [* 126] *legislative power shall be vested in two houses, would be to a greater or less degree rendered ineffectual.³

¹ Meshmeier v. State, 11 Ind. 484.

² Supporting such laws in addition to cases already cited are State v. Morris County, 36 N. J. 72; s. c. 13 Am. Rep. 422; State v. Wilcox, 42 Conn. 364; s. c. 19 Am. Rep. 536; Fell v. State, 42 Md. 71; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 83; Commonwealth v. Bennett, 108 Mass. 27; Commonwealth v. Dean, 110 Mass. 357; Commonwealth v. Fredericks, 119 Mass. 199; Groesch v. State, 42 Ind. 547. In Locke's Appeal, *supra*, it is said, after an admission that the legislature cannot delegate the power to make laws, "but it can make a law to delegate the power to determine some

fact or state of things upon which the law makes or intends to make its own action depend. To deny that would be to stop the wheels of government." And see Slinger v. Henne-
man, 38 Wis. 504; Erlinger v. Boneau, 51 Ill. 94.

³ "Unlike the decision of a court, a legislative act does not bind a subsequent legislature. Each body possesses the same power, and has a right to exercise the same discretion. Measures, though often rejected, may receive legislative sanction. There is no mode by which a legislative act can be made irrepealable, except it assume the form and substance of a

“Acts of Parliament,” says Blackstone, “derogatory to the power of subsequent Parliaments, bind not; so the statute 11 Henry VII. c. 1, which directs that no person for assisting a king *de facto* shall be attainted of treason by act of Parliament or otherwise, is held to be good only as to common prosecutions for high treason, but it will not restrain or clog any parliamentary attainder. Because the legislature, being in truth the sovereign power, is always of equal, and always of absolute authority; it acknowledges no superior upon earth, which the prior legislature must have been if its ordinances could bind a subsequent Parliament. And upon the same principle, Cicero, in his letters to Atticus, treats with a proper contempt those restraining clauses which endeavor to tie up the hands of succeeding legislatures. ‘When you repeal the law itself,’ says he, ‘you at the same time repeal the prohibitory clause which guards against such repeal.’”¹

Although this reasoning does not in all its particulars apply to the American legislatures, the principle applicable in each case is the same. There is a modification of the principle, however, by an important provision of the Constitution of the United States, forbidding the States passing any laws impairing the obligation of contracts. Legislative acts are sometimes in substance contracts between the State and the party who is to derive some right under them, and they are not the less under the protection of the clause quoted because of having assumed this form. Charters of incorporation, except those of a municipal character, — and which, as we have already seen, create mere agencies of government, — * are held to be contracts between the [* 127] State and the corporators, and not subject to modification or change by the act of the State alone, except as may be authorized by the terms of the charters themselves.² And it now seems

contract. If in any line of legislation a permanent character could be given to acts, the most injurious consequences would result to the country. Its policy would become fixed and unchangeable on great national interests, which might retard, if not destroy, the public prosperity. Every legislative body, unless restricted by the constitution, may modify or abolish the acts of its predecessors; whether it would be wise to do so, is a matter for legislative discretion.”

Bloomer v. Stolley, 5 McLean, 161. See this subject considered in Wall v. State, 23 Ind. 150, and State v. Os-kins, 28 Ind. 364; Oleson v. Green Bay, &c. R. R. Co., 36 Wis. 383. In Kellogg v. Oshkosh, 14 Wis. 623, it was held that one legislature could not bind a future one to a particular mode of appeal.

¹ 1 Bl. Com. 90.

² Dartmouth College v. Woodward, 4 Wheat. 518; Planters' Bank v. Sharp, 6 How. 301.

to be settled, by the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States, that a State, by contract to that effect, based upon a consideration, may exempt the property of an individual or corporation from taxation for any specified period, or even permanently. And it is also settled, by the same decisions, that where a charter containing an exemption from taxes, or an agreement that the taxes shall be to a specified amount only, is accepted by the incorporators, the exemption is presumed to be upon sufficient consideration, and consequently binding upon the State.¹

Territorial Limitation to State Legislative Authority.

The legislative authority of every State must spend its [* 128] force * within the territorial limits of the State. The legislature of one State cannot make laws by which people

¹ *Gordon v. Appeal Tax Court*, 3 How. 133; *New Jersey v. Wilson*, 7 Cranch, 164; *Piqua Branch Bank v. Knoop*, 16 How. 369; *Ohio Life Ins. and Trust Co. v. Debolt*, 16 How. 416, 432; *Dodge v. Woolsey*, 18 How. 331; *Mechanics' and Traders' Bank v. Debolt*, 18 How. 381; *Jefferson Branch Bank v. Skelly*, 1 Black, 436; *Erie R. R. Co. v. Pennsylvania*, 21 Wall. 492. See also *Hunsaker v. Wright*, 30 Ill. 146; *Morgan v. Cree*, 46 Vt. 773; *Spooner v. McConnell*, 1 McLean, 347; *post*, p. *280. The right of a State legislature to grant away the right of taxation, which is one of the essential attributes of sovereignty, has been strenuously denied. See *Debolt v. Ohio Life Ins. and Trust Co.*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 563; *Mechanics' and Traders' Bank v. Debolt*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 591; *Brewster v. Hough*, 10 N. H. 143; *Mott v. Pennsylvania Railroad Co.*, 30 Penn. St. 9. And see *Thorpe v. Rutland and B. Railroad Co.*, 27 Vt. 146; *post*, p. *280 and note. In *Brick Presbyterian Church v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 5 Cow. 538, it was held that a municipal corporation had no power, as a party, to make a contract

which should control or embarrass its discharge of legislative duties. And see *post*, p. *206. In *Coats v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 7 Cow. 585, it was decided that though a municipal corporation grant lands for cemetery purposes, and covenant for their quiet enjoyment, it will not thereby be estopped afterwards to forbid the use of the land by by-law, for that purpose, when such use becomes or is likely to become a nuisance. See also, on the same subject, *Morgan v. Smith*, 4 Minn. 104; *Kincaid's Appeal*, 66 Penn. St. 411; s. c. 5 Am. Rep. 377; *Hamrick v. Rouse*, 17 Geo. 56, where it was held that the legislature could not bind its successors not to remove a county seat; *Bass v. Fontleroy*, 11 Tex. 698; *Shaw v. Macon*, 21 Geo. 280; *Regents of University v. Williams*, 9 G. & J. 390; *Mott v. Pennsylvania Railroad Co.*, 30 Penn. St. 9. In *Bank of Republic v. Hamilton*, 21 Ill. 53, it was held that, in construing a statute, it will not be intended that the legislature designed to abandon its right as to taxation. This subject is considered further, *post*, pp. *280-284.

outside the State must govern their actions, except as they may have occasion to resort to the remedies which the State provides, or to deal with property situated within the State. It can have no authority upon the high seas beyond State lines, because there is the point of contact with other nations, and all international questions belong to the national government.¹ It cannot provide for the punishment as crimes of acts committed beyond the State boundary, because such acts, if offences at all, must be offences against the sovereignty within whose limits they have been done.² But if the consequences of an unlawful act committed outside the State have reached their ultimate and injurious result within it, it seems that the perpetrator may be punished as an offender against such State.³

Other Limitations of Legislative Authority.

Besides the limitations of legislative authority to which we have referred, others exist which do not seem to call for special remark. Some of these are prescribed by constitutions,⁴

¹ 1 Bish. Cr. Law, § 120.

² *State v. Knight*, 2 Hayw. 109; *People v. Merrill*, 2 Park. Cr. R. 590; *Adams v. People*, 1 N. Y. 173; *Tyler v. People*, 8 Mich. 320; *Morrissey v. People*, 11 Mich. 327; *Bromley v. People*, 7 Mich. 472; *State v. Main*, 16 Wis. 398; *Watson's Case*, 36 Miss. 593.

³ In *Tyler v. People*, 8 Mich. 320, it was held constitutional to punish in Michigan a homicide committed by a mortal blow in Canadian waters, from which death resulted in the State. In *Morrissey v. People*, 11 Mich. 327, the court was divided on the question whether the State could lawfully provide for the punishment of persons who, having committed larceny abroad, brought the stolen property within the State. The power was sustained in *People v. Williams*, 24 Mich. 156, where the larceny was in another State. And see *State v. Main*, 16 Wis. 398; *Regina v. Hennessy*, 35 Upper Canada R. 603.

⁴ The restrictions upon State legislative authority are much more extensive in some constitutions than in others. The Constitution of Missouri of 1865 had the following provision: "The General Assembly shall not pass special laws divorcing any named parties, or declaring any named person of age, or authorizing any named minor to sell, lease, or encumber his or her property, or providing for the sale of the real estate of any named minor or other person laboring under legal disability, by any executor, administrator, guardian, trustee, or other person, or establishing, locating, altering the course, or effecting the construction of roads, or the building or repairing of bridges, or establishing, altering, or vacating any street, avenue, or alley in any city or town, or extending the time for the assessment or collection of taxes, or otherwise relieving any assessor or collector of taxes from the due performance of his official duties, or giving effect to in-

[* 129] but * others spring from the very nature of free government. The latter must depend for their enforcement upon legislative wisdom, discretion, and conscience.¹ The legislature is to make laws for the public good, and not for the benefit of

formal or invalid wills or deeds, or legalizing, except as against the State, the unauthorized or invalid acts of any officer, or granting to any individual or company the right to lay down railroad tracks in the streets of any city or town, or exempting any property of any named person or corporation from taxation. The General Assembly shall pass no special law for any case for which provision can be made by a general law, but shall pass general laws providing, so far as it may deem necessary, for the cases enumerated in this section, and for all other cases where a general law can be made applicable." Art. 4, § 27. We should suppose that so stringent a provision would, in some of these cases, lead to the passage of general laws of doubtful utility in order to remedy the hardships of particular cases; but the constitution adopted in 1875 is still more restrictive. Art. 4, § 53. As to when a general law can be made applicable, see *Thomas v. Board of Commissioners*, 5 Ind. 4; *State v. Squires*, 26 Iowa, 340; *Johnson v. Railroad Co.*, 23 Ill. 202. In *State v. Hitchcock*, 1 Kan. 178, it was held that the constitutional provision, that "in all cases where a general law can be made applicable, no special law shall be enacted," left a discretion with the legislature to determine the cases in which special laws should be passed. See to the same effect *Gentile v. State*, 29 Ind. 409, and *Marks v. Trustees of Purdue University*, 37 Ind. 163; *State v. Tucker*, 46 Ind. 355, overruling *Thomas v. Board of Commissioners*, *supra*. To the same effect is *State v. County Court of Boone*, 50 Mo. 317; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 415; *State v. Robbins*, 51 Mo. 82; *Hall v. Bray*,

51 Mo. 288; *St. Louis v. Shields*, 62 Mo. 247. Compare *Hess v. Pegg*, 7 Nev. 23; *Darling v. Rogers*, 7 Kan. 592; *Ex parte Pritz*, 9 Iowa, 80. Where the legislature is forbidden to pass special or local laws regulating county or township business, a special act allowing and ordering payment of a particular claim is void, even though the claim, being merely an equitable one, cannot be audited by any existing board. *Williams v. Bidleman*, 7 Nev. 68. See *Darling v. Rogers*, 7 Kan. 592. An act creating a criminal court for a particular county is not in conflict with the constitutional prohibition of special legislation. *Eitel v. State*, 33 Ind. 201. See *Matter of Boyle*, 9 Wis. 264. A constitutional provision that requires all laws of a general nature to have uniform operation throughout the State is complied with in a statute applicable to all cities of a certain class having less than one hundred thousand inhabitants, though in fact there be but one city in the State of that class. *Welker v. Potter*, 18 Ohio, n. s. 85. See further, *Bourland v. Hildreth*, 26 Cal. 162; *Brooks v. Hyde*, 37 Cal. 366; *McAurich v. Mississippi, &c. R. R. Co.*, 20 Iowa, 338; *Rice v. State*, 3 Kan. 141; *Jackson v. Shawl*, 29 Cal. 267; *Gentile v. State*, 29 Ind. 409; *State v. Parkinson*, 5 Nev. 15; *Ensworth v. Albin*, 46 Mo. 450; *People v. Wallace*, 70 Ill. 680. So where the legislature, for urgent reasons, may suspend the rules and allow a bill to be read twice on the same day, what constitutes a case of urgency is a question for the legislative discretion. *Hull v. Miller*, 4 Neb. 503.

¹ *Walker v. Cincinnati*, 21 Ohio, n. s. 14, 41.

individuals. It has control of the public moneys, and should provide for disbursing them only for public purposes. Taxes should only be levied for those purposes which properly constitute a public burden. But what is for the public good, and what are public purposes, and what does properly constitute a public burden, are questions which the legislature must decide upon its own judgment, and in respect to which it is vested with a large discretion which cannot be controlled by the courts, except, perhaps, where its action is clearly evasive, and where, under pretence of a lawful authority, it has assumed to exercise one that is unlawful. Where the power which is exercised is legislative in its character, the courts can enforce only those limitations which the constitution imposes; not those implied restrictions which, resting in theory only, the people have been satisfied to leave to the judgment, patriotism, and sense of justice of their representatives.¹

¹ *State v. McCann*, 21 Ohio St. 211, 212.

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* CHAPTER VI.

OF THE ENACTMENT OF LAWS.

WHEN the supreme power of a country is wielded by a single man, or by a single body of men, any discussion in the courts of the rules which should be observed in the enactment of laws must generally be without practical value, and in fact impertinent; for, whenever the unfettered sovereign power of any country expresses its will in the promulgation of a rule of law, the expression must be conclusive, though proper and suitable forms may have been wholly omitted in declaring it. It is a necessary attribute of sovereignty that the expressed will of the sovereign is law; and while we may question and cross-question the words employed, to make certain of the real meaning, and may hesitate and doubt concerning it, yet, when the intent is made out, it must govern, and it is idle to talk of forms that should have surrounded the expression, but do not. But when the legislative power of a State is to be exercised by a department composed of two branches, or, as in most of the American States, of three branches, and these branches have their several duties marked out and prescribed by the law to which they owe their origin, and which provides for the exercise of their powers in certain modes and under certain forms, there are other questions to arise than those of the mere intent of the law-makers, and sometimes forms become of the last importance. For in such case not only is it important that the will of the law-makers be clearly expressed, but it is also essential that it be expressed in due form of law; since nothing becomes law simply and solely because men who possess the legislative power will that it shall be, unless they express their determination to that effect, in the mode pointed out by the instrument which invests them with the power, and under all the forms which that instrument has rendered essential.¹ And if, when the con-

¹ A bill becomes a law only when made necessary by the constitution to it has gone through all the forms give it validity. *Jones v. Hutchinson*,

stitution was adopted, there were known and settled rules and usages, forming a part of the law of the country, in reference to which the constitution has evidently been framed, and these rules and usages required the observance of particular forms, the constitution itself must also be understood as requiring them, because in assuming their existence, and being * framed [* 131] with reference to them, it has in effect adopted them as a part of itself, as much as if they were expressly incorporated in its provisions. Where, for an instance, the legislative power is to be exercised by two houses, and by settled and well-understood parliamentary law, these two houses are to hold separate sessions for their deliberations, and the determination of the one upon a proposed law is to be submitted to the separate determination of the other, the constitution, in providing for two houses, has evidently spoken in reference to this settled custom, incorporating it as a rule of constitutional interpretation; so that it would require no prohibitory clause to forbid the two houses from combining in one, and jointly enacting laws by the vote of a majority of all. All those rules which are of the essentials of law-making must be observed and followed; and it is only the customary rules of order and routine, such as in every deliberative body are always understood to be under its control, and subject to constant change at its will, that the constitution can be understood to have left as matters of discretion, to be established, modified, or abolished by the bodies for whose government in non-essential matters they exist.

Of the two Houses of the Legislature.¹

In the enactment of laws the two houses of the legislature are of equal importance, dignity, and power, and the steps which

43 Ala. 721; *State v. Platt*, 2 S. C. n. s. 150; s. c. 16 Am. Rep. 647; *People v. Commissioners of Highways*, 54 N. Y. 276; *Moody v. State*, 48 Ala. 115; s. c. 17 Am. Rep. 28; *Legg v. Annapolis*, 42 Md. 303.

¹ The wisdom of a division of the legislative department has been demonstrated by the leading writers on constitutional law, as well as by general experience. See De Lolme, *Const. of*

England, b. 2, c. 3; *Federalist*, No. 22; 1 Kent, 208; Story on *Const.* §§ 545–570. The early experiments in Pennsylvania and Georgia, based on Franklin's views, for which see his *Works*, Vol. V. p. 165, were the only ones made by any of the original States with a single house. The first Constitution of Vermont also provided for a single legislative body.

result in laws may originate indifferently in either. This is the general rule; but as one body is more numerous than the other and more directly represents the people, and in many of the States is renewed by more frequent elections, the power to originate all money bills, or bills for the raising of revenue, is left exclusively, by the constitutions of some of the States, with this body, in accordance with the custom in England, which does not

permit bills of this character to originate with the House [* 132] of Lords.¹ To these * bills, however, the other house may

propose alterations, and they require the assent of that house to their passage, the same as other bills. The time for the meeting of the legislature will be such time as is fixed by the constitution or by statute; but it may be called together by the executive in special session as the constitution may prescribe, and the two houses may also adjourn any general session to a time fixed by them for the holding of a special session, if an agreement to that effect can be arrived at; and if not, power is conferred by a majority of the constitutions upon the executive to prorogue and adjourn them. And if the executive in any case undertake to exercise this power to prorogue and adjourn, on the assumption that a disagreement exists between the two houses which warrants his interference, and his action is acquiesced in by those bodies, who thereupon cease to hold their regular sessions, the legislature must be held in law to have adjourned, and no inquiry can be entered upon as to the rightfulness of the governor's assumption that such a disagreement existed.²

¹ There are provisions in the Constitutions of Massachusetts, Delaware, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont, Indiana, Oregon, Kentucky, Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Virginia, Maine, and Colorado requiring revenue bills to originate in the more popular branch of the legislature, but allowing the Senate the power of amendment usual in other cases. During the second session of the forty-first Congress, the House of Representatives by their vote denied the right of the Senate under the Constitution to originate a bill repealing a law imposing

taxes; but the Senate did not assent to this conclusion. In England the Lords are not allowed to amend money bills, and by resolutions of 5th and 6th July, 1860, the Commons deny their right even to reject them.

² This question became important, and was passed upon in *People v. Hatch*, 33 Ill. 9. The Senate had passed a resolution for an adjournment of the session *sine die* on a day named, which was amended by the House by fixing a different day. The Senate refused to concur, and the House then passed a resolution expressing a desire to recede from its action in amending the resolution, and

* There are certain matters which each house deter- [* 133] mines for itself, and in respect to which its decision is conclusive. It chooses its own officers, except where, by constitution or statute, other provision is made; it determines its own rules of proceeding; it decides upon the election and qualification of its own members.¹ These powers it is obviously proper should rest with the body immediately interested, as essential to enable it to enter upon and proceed with its legislative functions, without liability to interruption and confusion. In determining questions concerning contested seats, the house will exercise judicial power, but generally in accordance with a course of practice which has sprung from precedents in similar cases, and no other authority is at liberty to interfere.

Each house has also the power to punish members for disorderly behavior, and other contempts of its authority, as well as to

requesting a return of the resolution by the Senate. While matters stood thus, the governor, assuming that such a disagreement existed as empowered him to interfere, sent in his proclamation, declaring the legislature adjourned to a day named, and which was at the very end of the official term of the members. The message created excitement; it does not seem to have been at once acquiesced in, and a protest against the governor's authority was entered upon the journal; but for eleven days in one house and twelve in the other no entries were made upon their journals, and it was unquestionable that practically they had acquiesced in the action of the governor, and adjourned. At the expiration of the twelve days, a portion of the members came together again, and it was claimed by them that the message of the governor was without authority, and the two houses must be considered as having been, in point of law, in session during the intervening period, and that consequently any bills which had before been passed by them and sent to the governor for his approval, and which he had not returned within ten days, Sundays

excepted, had become laws under the constitution. The Supreme Court held that, as the two houses had practically acquiesced in the action of the governor, the session had come to an end, and that the members had no power to reconvene on their own motion, as had been attempted. The case is a very full and valuable one on several points pertaining to legislative proceedings and authority. As to the governor's discretion in calling an extra session and revoking the call, see *ante*, p. *115, note.

¹ In *People v. Mahaney*, 13 Mich. 481, it was held that the correctness of a decision by one of the houses, that certain persons had been chosen members, could not be inquired into by the courts. In that case a law was assailed as void, on the ground that a portion of the members who voted for it, and without whose votes it would not have had the requisite majority, had been given their seats in the house in defiance of law, and to the exclusion of others who had a majority of legal votes. See the same principle in *State v. Jarrett*, 17 Md. 309. See also *Lamb v. Lynd*, 44 Penn. St. 336; *Opinion of Justices*, 56 N. H. 570.

expel a member for any cause which seems to the body to render it unfit that he continue to occupy one of its seats. This power is generally enumerated in the constitution among those which the two houses may exercise, but it need not be specified in the instrument, since it would exist whether expressly conferred or not. It is "a necessary and incidental power, to enable the house to perform its high functions, and is necessary to the safety of the State. It is a power of protection. A member may be physically, mentally, or morally wholly unfit; he may be affected with a contagious disease, or insane, or noisy, violent, and disorderly or in the habit of using profane, obscene, and abusive language." And, "independently of parliamentary customs and usages, our legislative houses have the power to protect themselves by the punishment and expulsion of a member;" and the courts cannot inquire into the justice of the decision, or even so much as examine the proceedings to see whether or not the proper opportunity for defence was furnished.¹

[* 134] * Each house may also punish contempts of its authority by other persons, where they are committed in its presence, or where they tend directly to embarrass or obstruct its legislative proceedings; and it requires for the purpose no express provision of the constitution conferring the authority.² It is not very well settled what are the limits to this power; and in the leading case in this country the speaker's warrant for the arrest of the person adjudged guilty of contempt was sustained, though it did not show in what the alleged contempt consisted.³ In the leading English case a libellous publication concerning the house was treated as a contempt;⁴ and punishment has sometimes been inflicted for assaults upon members of the house, not committed in or near the place of sitting, and for the arrest of members in disregard of their constitutional privilege.⁵ Where imprisonment

¹ *Hiss v. Bartlett*, 3 Gray, 468. And see *Anderson v. Dunn*, 6 Wheat. 204.

² *Anderson v. Dunn*, 6 Wheat. 204; *Burdett v. Abbott*, 14 East, 1; *Burnham v. Morrissey*, 14 Gray, 226; *State v. Matthews*, 37 N. H. 450. See *post*, p. *458, note.

³ *Anderson v. Dunn*, 6 Wheat. 204. And see *Gosset v. Howard*, 10 Q. B. 451; *Stewart v. Blaine*, 1 McArthur, 453.

⁴ *Burdett v. Abbott*, 14 East, 1.

⁵ Mr. Potter discusses such a case in his edition of *Dwarris on Statutes*, c. 18, and Mr. Robinson deals with the case of an arrest for a criminal act, not committed in the presence of the house, in the preface to the sixth volume of his *Practice*. As to the general right of Parliament to punish for contempt, see *Gosset v. Howard*, 10 Q. B. 411.

is imposed as a punishment, it must terminate with the final adjournment of the house, and if the prisoner be not then discharged by its order, he may be released on *habeas corpus*.¹

By common parliamentary law, the members of the legislature are privileged from arrest on civil process during the session of that body, and for a reasonable time before and after, to enable them to go to and return from the same. By the constitutions of some of the States this privilege has been enlarged, so as to exempt the persons of legislators from any service of civil process,² and in others their estates are exempt from attachment for some prescribed period.³ For any arrest contrary to the parliamentary law or to these provisions, the house of which the person arrested is a member may give summary relief by ordering his discharge, and if the order is not complied with, by punishing the persons concerned in the arrest as for a contempt of its authority. The remedy of the member, however, is not confined to this mode of relief. His privilege is not the privilege of the house merely, but of the people, and is conferred to enable him to discharge the trust confided to him by his constituents;⁴ and if the house neglect to interfere, the court from which the process issued should set it aside on the facts being represented, and any court or officer having authority to issue writs of *habeas corpus* may also *inquire into the case, and release the party [* 135] from the unlawful imprisonment.⁶

Each house must also be allowed to proceed in its own way in

¹ Jefferson's Manual, § 18; Prichard's Case, 1 Lev. 165; 1 Sid. 245; T. Raym. 120.

² "Senators and representatives shall, in all cases except treason, felony, or breach of the peace, be privileged from arrest. They shall not be subject to any civil process during the session of the legislature, or for fifteen days next before the commencement and after the termination of each session." Const. of Mich. art. 4, § 7. A like exemption from civil process is found in the Constitutions of Kansas, Nebraska, Alabama, Arkansas, California, Missouri, Mississippi, Wisconsin, Indiana, Oregon, and Colorado. Exemption from arrest is not violated by the service of citations or declara-

tions in civil cases. Gentry v. Griffith, 27 Tex. 461; Case v. Rorabacker, 15 Mich. 537.

³ The Constitution of Rhode Island provides that "the person of every member of the General Assembly shall be exempt from arrest, and his estate from attachment, in any civil action, during the session of the General Assembly, and two days before the commencement and two days after the termination thereof, and all process served contrary hereto shall be void." Art. 4, § 5.

⁴ Coffin v. Coffin, 4 Mass. 27.

⁵ On this subject, Cushing on Law and Practice of Parliamentary Assemblies, §§ 546-597, will be consulted with profit.

the collection of such information as may seem important to a proper discharge of its functions,¹ and whenever it is deemed desirable that witnesses should be examined, the power and authority to do so is very properly referred to a committee, with any such powers short of final legislative or judicial action as may seem necessary or expedient in the particular case. Such a committee has no authority to sit during a recess of the house which has appointed it, without its permission to that effect; but the house is at liberty to confer such authority if it see fit.² A refusal to appear or to testify before such committee, or to produce books or papers, would be a contempt of the house;³ but the committee cannot punish for contempts; it can only report the conduct of the offending party to the house for its action. The power of the committee will terminate with the final dissolution of the house appointing it.

Each house keeps a journal of its proceedings, which is a public record, and of which the courts are at liberty to take judicial notice.⁴ If it should appear from these journals that any act did

¹ See *Tillinghast v. Carr*, 4 McCord, 152.

² *Branham v. Lange*, 16 Ind. 497; *Marshall v. Harwood*, 7 Md. 466. See also parliamentary cases, 5 Gray, 374; 9 Gray, 350; 1 Chandler, 50.

³ *In re Falvey*, 7 Wis. 630; *Burnham v. Morrissey*, 14 Gray, 226. But the privilege of a witness to be exempt from a compulsory disclosure of his own criminal conduct is the same when examined by a legislative body or committee as when sworn in court. *Emery's Case*, 107 Mass. 172. In the *Matter of Kilbourn* (May, 1876), Chief Justice *Carter*, of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, discharged on *habeas corpus* a person committed by the House of Representatives for a contempt in refusing to testify; holding that as the refusal was an indictable offence by statute, a trial therefor must be in the courts, and not elsewhere. If this is correct, the necessities of legislation will require a repeal of the statute; for if, in political cases, the question of pun-

ishment for failure to give information must be left to a jury, few convictions are to be expected, and no wholesome fear of the consequences of a refusal. On questions of conflict between the legislature and the courts in matters of contempt, the great case of *Stockdale v. Hansard*, 9 Ad. & El. 1, s. c. 3 Per. & Dav. 330, is of the highest interest. See May, *Const. Hist.* c. 7.

⁴ *Spangler v. Jacoby*, 14 Ill. 297; *Turley v. Logan Co.*, 17 Ill. 151; *Jones v. Hutchinson*, 43 Ala. 721; *State v. Moffit*, 5 Ohio, 358; *Miller v. State*, 3 Ohio, n. s. 475; *Fordyce v. Godman*, 20 Ohio, n. s. 1; *People v. Supervisors of Chenango*, 8 N. Y. 317; *People v. Mahaney*, 13 Mich. 481; *Southwark Bank v. Commonwealth*, 2 Penn. St. 446; *McCulloch v. State*, 11 Ind. 430; *Osborn v. Staley*, 5 W. Va. 85; s. c. 17 Am. Rep. 28; *State v. Platt*, 2 S. C. n. s. 150; s. c. 16 Am. Rep. 647; *Moody v. State*, 48 Ala. 115; *Gardner v. The Collector*, 6 Wall. 499; *South Ottawa*

not receive the requisite majority, or that in respect to it the legislature did not follow any requirement of the constitution, or that in any other respect the act was not constitutionally adopted, the courts may act upon this evidence, and adjudge the statute void.¹ But whenever it is acting in the apparent performance of legal functions, every reasonable presumption is to be made in favor of the action of a legislative body; it will not be presumed in any case, from the mere silence of the journals, that either house has exceeded its authority, or disregarded a *constitutional requirement in the passage of legislative [* 136] acts, unless where the constitution has expressly required the journals to show the action taken, as, for instance, where it requires the yeas and nays to be entered.²

The law also seeks to cast its protection around legislative sessions, and to shield them against corrupt and improper influences,

v. Perkins, 94 U. S. Rep. 260. The presumption always is, when the act, as signed and enrolled, does not show the contrary, that it has gone through all necessary formalities; but this presumption may be overthrown by the journals. *Berry v. Baltimore, &c. R. R. Co.*, 41 Md. 446; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 69; *Green v. Weller*, 32 Miss. 650. And see *Opinions of Justices*, 52 N. H. 622; *Hensoldt v. Petersburg*, 63 Ill. 157; *Larrison v. Peoria, &c. R. R. Co.*, 77 Ill. 12; *People v. Commissioners of Highways*, 54 N. Y. 276; *English v. Oliver*, 28 Ark. 317; *State v. Swift*, 10 Nev. 176. In a few States the ruling is *contra*. See *Sherman v. Story*, 30 Cal. 253; *People v. Burt*, 43 Cal. 560; *Louisiana Lottery Co. v. Richoux*, 23 La. Ann. 743; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 602; *Blessing v. Galveston*, 42 Tex. 641. It has been held that where the constitution requires previous notice of an application for a private act, the courts cannot go behind the act to inquire whether the notice was given. *Brodnax v. Groom*, 64 N. C. 244. See *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 Mich. 44; *Day v. Stetson*, 8 Me. 365.

¹ See cases cited in preceding note ;

also *Prescott v. Trustees, &c.*, 19 Ill. 324.

² *Miller v. State*, 3 Ohio, n. s. 475; *McCulloch v. State*, 11 Ind. 424; *Supervisors v. People*, 25 Ill. 181. But where a statute can only be enacted by a certain majority, *e. g.* two-thirds, it must affirmatively appear by the printed statute or the act on file that such a vote was had. *People v. Commissioners of Highways*, 54 N. Y. 276. It seems that, in Illinois, if one claims that a supposed law was never passed, and relies upon the records to show it, he must prove them. *Illinois Cent. R. R. Co. v. Wren*, 43 Ill. 77; *Grob v. Cushman*, 45 Ill. 119; *Bedard v. Hall*, 44 Ill. 91. The court will not act upon the admission of parties that an act was not passed in the constitutional manner. *Happel v. Brethauer*, 70 Ill. 166.

The Constitution of Alabama, art. 4, § 27, requires the presiding officer of each house, in the presence of the house, to sign them "after the titles have been publicly read immediately before signing, and the fact of signing shall be entered on the journal." This seems a very imperative requirement.

by making void all contracts which have for their object to influence legislation in any other manner than by such open and public presentation of facts, arguments and appeals to reason as are recognized as proper and legitimate with all public bodies. While counsel may be properly employed to present the reasons in favor of any public measure to the body authorized to pass upon it, or to any of its committees empowered to collect facts and hear arguments, and parties interested may lawfully contract to pay for this service,¹ yet to secretly approach the members of such a body with a view to influence their action at a time and in a manner that do not allow the presentation of opposite views, is improper and unfair to the opposing interest; and a contract to pay for this irregular and improper service would not be enforced by the law.²

¹ See *Willey v. Collier*, 7 Md. 273; *Bryan v. Reynolds*, 5 Wis. 200; *Brown v. Brown*, 34 Barb. 533; *Russell v. Burton*, 66 Barb. 539.

² This whole subject was very fully considered in the case of *Frost v. Inhabitants of Belmont*, 6 Allen, 152, which was a bill filed to restrain the payment by the town of demands to the amount of nearly \$9,000, which the town had voted to pay as expenses in obtaining their act of incorporation. By the court, *Chapman, J.*: "It is to be regretted that any persons should have attempted to procure an act of legislation in this Commonwealth, by such means as some of these items indicate. By the regular course of legislation, organs are provided through which any parties may fairly and openly approach the legislature, and be heard with proofs and arguments respecting any legislative acts which they may be interested in, whether public or private. These organs are the various committees appointed to consider and report upon the matters to be acted upon by the whole body. When private interests are to be affected, notice is given of the hearings before these committees; and thus opportunity is given to adverse parties to meet face to face and

obtain a fair and open hearing. And though these committees properly dispense with many of the rules which regulate hearings before judicial tribunals, yet common fairness requires that neither party shall be permitted to have secret consultations, and exercise secret influences that are kept from the knowledge of the other party. The business of 'lobby members' is not to go fairly and openly before the committees, and present statements, proofs, and arguments that the other side has an opportunity to meet and refute, if they are wrong, but to go secretly to the members and ply them with statements and arguments that the other side cannot openly meet, however erroneous they may be, and to bring illegitimate influences to bear upon them. If the 'lobby member' is selected because of his political or personal influence, it aggravates the wrong. If his business is to unite various interests by means of projects that are called 'log rolling,' it is still worse. The practice of procuring members of the legislature to act under the influence of what they have eaten and drank at houses of entertainment, tends to render those who yield to such influences wholly unfit to act in such

* *The Introduction and Passage of Bills.* [* 137]

Any member may introduce a bill in the house to which he belongs, in accordance with its rules; and this he may do

cases. They are disqualified from acting fairly towards interested parties or towards the public. The tendency and object of these influences are to obtain by corruption what it is supposed cannot be obtained fairly.

"It is a well-established principle, that all contracts which are opposed to public policy, and to open, upright, and fair dealing, are illegal and void. The principle was fully discussed in *Fuller v. Dame*, 18 Pick. 472. In several other States it has been applied to cases quite analogous to the present case.

"In *Pingrey v. Washburn*, 1 Aik. 264, it was held in Vermont that an agreement, on the part of a corporation, to grant to individuals certain privileges in consideration that they would withdraw their opposition to the passage of a legislative act touching the interests of the corporation, is against sound policy, prejudicial to just and correct legislation, and void. In *Gulick v. Ward*, 5 Halst. 87, it was decided in New Jersey that a contract which contravenes an act of Congress, and tends to defraud the United States, is void. A. had agreed to give B. \$100, on condition that B. would forbear to propose or offer himself to the Postmaster-General to carry the mail on a certain mail route, and it was held that the contract was against public policy and void. The general principle as to contracts contravening public policy was discussed in that case at much length. In *Wood v. McCann*, 6 Dana, 366, the defendant had employed the plaintiff to assist him in obtaining a legislative act in Kentucky legalizing his divorce from a former wife, and his marriage with his present wife.

The court say: 'A lawyer may be entitled to compensation for writing a petition, or even for making a public argument before the legislature or a committee thereof; but the law should not hold him or any other person to a recompense for exercising any personal influence in any way, in any act of legislation. It is certainly important to just and wise legislation, and therefore to the most essential interests of the public, that the legislature should be perfectly free from any extraneous influence which may either corrupt or deceive the members, or any of them.'

"In *Clippinger v. Hepbaugh*, 5 Watts & S. 315, it was decided in Pennsylvania that a contract to procure or endeavor to procure the passage of an act of the legislature by using personal influence with the members, or by any sinister means, was void, as being inconsistent with public policy and the integrity of our political institutions. And an agreement for a contingent fee to be paid on the passage of a legislative act was held to be illegal and void, because it would be a strong incentive to the exercise of personal and sinister influences to effect the object.

"The subject has been twice adjudicated upon in New York. In *Harris v. Roof*, 10 Barb. 469, the Supreme Court held that one could not recover for services performed in going to see individual members of the house, to get them to aid in voting for a private claim, the services not being performed before the house as a body nor before its authorized committees. In *Sedgwick v. Stanton*, 4 Kernan, 289, the court of appeals held the same doctrine, and stated its proper

[* 138] at any * time when the house is in session, unless the constitution, the law, or the rules of the house forbid.

limits. *Selden, J.*, makes the following comments on the case of *Harris v. Roof*: 'Now the court did not mean by this decision to hold that one who has a claim against the State may not employ competent persons to aid him in properly presenting such claim to the legislature, and in supporting it with the necessary proofs and arguments. Mr. Justice *Hand*, who delivered the opinion of the court, very justly distinguishes between services of the nature of those rendered in that case, and the procuring and preparing the necessary documents in support of a claim, or acting as counsel before the legislature or some committee appointed by that body. Persons may, no doubt, be employed to conduct an application to the legislature, as well as to conduct a suit at law; and may contract for and receive pay for their services in preparing documents, collecting evidence, making statements of facts, or preparing and making oral or written arguments, provided all these are used or designed to be used before the legislature or some committee thereof as a body; but they cannot, with propriety, be employed to exert their personal influence with individual members, or to labor in any form privately with such members out of the legislative halls. Whatever is laid before the legislature in writing, or spoken openly or publicly in its presence or that of a committee, if false in fact, may be disproved, or if wrong in argument may be refuted; but that which is whispered into the private ear of individual members is frequently beyond the reach of correction. The point of objection in this class of cases then is, the personal and private nature of the services to be rendered.'

"In *Fuller v. Dame*, cited above,

Shaw, Ch. J., recognizes the well-established right to contract and pay for professional services when the promisee is to act as attorney and counsel, but remarks that 'the fact appearing that persons do so act prevents any injurious effects from such proceeding. Such counsel is considered as standing in the place of his principal, and his arguments and representations are weighed and considered accordingly.' He also admits the right of disinterested persons to volunteer advice; as when a person is about to make a will, one may represent to him the propriety and expediency of making a bequest to a particular person; and so may one volunteer advice to another to marry another person; but a promise to pay for such service is void.

"Applying the principles stated in these cases to the bills which the town voted to pay, it is manifest that some of the money was expended for objects that are contrary to public policy, and of a most reprehensible character, and which could not, therefore, form a legal consideration for a contract."

See, further, a full discussion of the same subject, and reaching the same conclusion, by Mr. Justice *Grier*, in *Marshall v. Baltimore & Ohio R. R. Co.*, 16 How. 314. A sale of a town office, though by the town itself, cannot be the consideration for a contract. *Meredith v. Ladd*, 2 N. H. 517; see *Carleton v. Whitcher*, 5 N. H. 196; *Eddy v. Capron*, 4 R. I. 394. A town cannot incur expenses in opposing before a legislative committee a division of the territorial limits: *Westbrook v. Deering*, 63 Me. 231; or to pay the expenses of a committee to procure the annexation of the town to another: *Minot v. West Roxbury*, 112 Mass. 1; s. c.

The Constitution of Michigan* provides that no new bill [* 139] shall be introduced into either house of the legislature after the first fifty days of the session shall have expired ;¹ and the Constitution of Maryland provides that no bill shall originate in either house within the last ten days of the session.² The purpose of these clauses is to prevent hasty and improvident legislation, and to compel, so far as any previous law can accomplish that result, the careful examination of proposed laws, or at least the affording of opportunity for that purpose ; which will not always be done when bills may be introduced up to the very hour of adjournment, and, with the concurrence of the proper majority, put immediately upon their passage.³

17 Am. Rep. 52. And any contract the purpose of which is to influence a public officer or body to favor persons in the performance of his public duty is void, on grounds of public policy. *Ordineal v. Barry*, 24 Miss. 9. The same general principle will be found applied in the following cases : *Swayze v. Hull*, 8 N. J. 54 ; *Wood v. McCann*, 6 Dana, 366 ; *Hatzfield v. Gulden*, 7 Watts, 152 ; *Gil v. Davis*, 12 La. Ann. 219 ; *Powers v. Skinner*, 34 Vt. 274 ; *Frankfort v. Winterport*, 54 Me. 250 ; *Rose v. Lonax*, 21 Barb. 361 ; *Devlin v. Brady*, 32 Barb. 518. A contract to assist by money and influence to secure the election of a candidate to a public office in consideration of a share of its emoluments, in the event of election, is void as opposed to public policy, and if voluntarily rescinded by the parties a recovery cannot be had of the moneys advanced under it. *Martin v. Wade*, 37 Cal. 168. So is a contract to resign an office that another may be appointed. *Eddy v. Capron*, 4 R. I. 394.

¹ Art. 4, § 28.

² Art. 3, § 26. In Arkansas there is a similar provision, limiting the time to three days. Art. 5, § 24.

³ A practice has sprung up of evading these constitutional provisions by introducing a new bill after the time has expired when it may

constitutionally be done, as an amendment to some pending bill, the whole of which, except the enacting clause, is struck out to make way for it. Thus, the member who thinks he may possibly have occasion for the introduction of a new bill after the constitutional period has expired, takes care to introduce sham bills in due season which he can use as stocks to graft upon, and which he uses irrespective of their character or contents. The sham bill is perhaps a bill to incorporate the city of Siam. One of the member's constituents applies to him for legislative permission to construct a dam across the Wild Cat River. Forthwith, by *amendment*, the bill entitled a bill to incorporate the city of Siam has all after the enacting clause stricken out, and it is made to provide, as its sole object, that John Doe may construct a dam across the Wild Cat. With this title and in this form it is passed ; but the house then considerably amends the title to correspond with the purpose of the bill, and the law is passed, and the constitution at the same time saved ! This trick is so transparent, and so clearly in violation of the constitution, and the evidence at the same time is so fully spread upon the record, that it is a matter of surprise to find it so often resorted to.

For the same reason it is required by the constitutions of several of the States, that no bill shall have the force of law until on three several days it be read in each house, and free discussion allowed thereon ; unless, in case of urgency, four-fifths or some other specified majority of the house shall deem it expedient to dispense with this rule. The journals which each house keeps of its proceedings ought to show whether this rule is complied with or not ; but in case they do not, the passage in the manner provided by the constitution must be presumed, in accordance with the general rule which presumes the proper discharge of official [* 140] duty.¹ * In the reading of a bill, it seems to be sufficient

to read the written document that is adopted by the two houses ; even though something else becomes law in consequence of its passage, and by reason of being referred to in it.² Thus, a statute which incorporated a military company by reference to its constitution and by-laws, was held valid notwithstanding the constitution and by-laws, which would acquire the force of law by its passage, were not read in the two houses as a part of it.³

¹ *Supervisors of Schuyler Co. v. People*, 25 Ill. 181 ; *Miller v. State*, 3 Ohio, N. S. 480. In *People v. Starne*, 35 Ill. 121, it is said the courts should not enforce a legislative act unless there is record evidence, from the journals of the two houses, that every material requirement of the constitution has been satisfied. And see *Ryan v. Lynch*, 68 Ill. 160. The clause in the Constitution of Ohio is: "Every bill shall be fully and distinctly read on three different days, unless, in case of urgency, three-fourths of the house in which it shall be pending shall dispense with this rule ;" and in *Miller v. State*, 3 Ohio, N. S. 481, and *Pim v. Nicholson*, 6 Ohio, N. S. 178, this provision was held to be merely directory. The *distinctness* with which any bill must be read cannot possibly be defined by any law ; and it must always, from the necessity of the case, rest with the house to determine finally whether in this particular the constitution has been complied with or not ; but the rule respecting three several

readings on different days is specific, and capable of being precisely complied with, and we do not see how, even under the rules applied to statutes, it can be regarded as directory merely, provided it has a purpose beyond the mere regular and orderly transaction of business. That it has such a purpose, that it is designed to prevent hasty and improvident legislation, and is therefore not a mere rule of order, but one of protection to the public interests and to the citizens at large, is very clear ; and independent of the question whether definite constitutional principles can be dispensed with in any case on the ground of their being merely directory, we cannot see how this can be treated as any thing but mandatory. See *People v. Campbell*, 8 Ill. 466 ; *McCulloch v. State*, 11 Ind. 424.

² *Dew v. Cunningham*, 28 Ala. 466.

³ *Bibb County Loan Association v. Richards*, 21 Geo. 592. And see *Pulford v. Fire Department*, 31 Mich. 458.

But there cannot be many cases, we should suppose, to which this ruling would be applicable.

It is also provided in the constitutions of some of the States that, on the final passage of every bill the yeas and nays shall be entered on the journal. Such a provision is designed to serve an important purpose in compelling each member present to assume as well as to feel his due share of responsibility in legislation; and also in furnishing definite and conclusive evidence whether the bill has been passed by the requisite majority or not. "The constitution prescribes this as the test by which to determine whether the requisite number of members vote in the affirmative. The office of the journal is to record the proceedings of the house, and authenticate and preserve the same. It must appear on the face of the journal that the bill passed by a constitutional majority. These directions are all clearly imperative. They are *expressly enjoined by the fundamental law as matters [* 141] of substance, and cannot be dispensed with by the legislature."¹

For the vote required in the passage of any particular law the reader is referred to the constitution of his State. A simple majority of a quorum is sufficient, unless the constitution establishes some other rule; and where, by the constitution, a two-thirds or three-fourths vote is made essential to the passage of any particular class of bills, two-thirds or three-fourths of a quorum will be understood, unless the terms employed clearly indicate that this proportion of all the members, or of all those elected, is intended.²

¹ Spangler v. Jacoby, 14 Ill. 297; Supervisors of Schuyler Co. v. People, 25 Ill. 183; Ryan v. Lynch, 68 Ill. 160; Steckert v. East Saginaw, 22 Mich. 104; People v. Commissioners of Highways, 54 N. Y. 276. For a peculiar case see Division of Howard County, 15 Kan. 194. There have been cases, as we happen to know, in which several bills have been put on their passage together, the yeas and nays being once called for them all, though the journal is made to state falsely a separate vote on each. We need hardly say that this is a manifest violation of the constitution,

which requires separate action in every case, and that when resorted to, it is usually for the purpose of avoiding another provision of the constitution which seeks to preclude "log-rolling" legislation, by forbidding the incorporation of distinct measures in one and the same statute.

² Southworth v. Palmyra & Jacksonburg R. R. Co., 2 Mich. 287; State v. McBride, 4 Mo. 303. By most of the constitutions either all the laws, or laws on some particular subjects, are required to be adopted by a majority vote or some other proportion of "all the members elected,"

The Title of a Statute.

The title of an act was formerly considered no part of it; and although it might be looked to as a guide to the intent of the law-makers when the body of the statute appeared to be in any respect ambiguous or doubtful,¹ yet it could not enlarge or restrain the provisions of the act itself,² and the latter might therefore be good when that and the title were in conflict. The reason for this was that anciently titles were not prefixed at all, and when afterwards they came to be introduced, they were usually prepared by the clerk of the house in which the bill first passed, and attracted but little attention from the members. They indicated the clerk's understanding of the contents or purpose of the bills, rather than that of the house; and they therefore were justly regarded as furnishing very little insight into the legislative intention. Titles to legislative acts, however, have recently, in some States, come to possess very great importance, by reason of constitutional provisions, which not only require that they shall correctly indicate the purpose of the law, but which absolutely make the title to control, and exclude every thing from effect and operation as law which is incorporated in the body of the act but is not within the purpose indicated by the title. These provisions are given in the note, and it will readily be perceived that they make a very great change in the law.³

or of "the whole representation." These and similar phrases require all the members to be taken into account whether present or not. Where a majority of all the members *elected* is required in the passage of a law, an ineligible person is not on that account to be excluded in the count. *Satterlee v. San Francisco*, 22 Cal. 314.

¹ *United States v. Palmer*, 3 Wheat. 610; *Burgett v. Burgett*, 1 Ohio, 480; *Mundt v. Sheboygan, &c. R. R. Co.*, 31 Wis. 451; *Eastman v. McAlpin*, 1 Kelley, 157; *Cohen v. Barrett*, 5 Call, 195; *Garrigas v. Board of Com'rs*, 39 Ind. 66. See *Dwarris on Statutes*, 502.

² *Hadden v. The Collector*, 5 Wall.

107. Compare *United States v. Union Pacific R. R. Co.*, 91 U. S. Rep. 72.

³ The Constitutions of Minnesota, Kansas, Maryland, Kentucky, Nebraska, and Ohio, provide that "no law shall embrace more than one subject, which shall be expressed in its title." Those of Michigan, New Jersey, Louisiana, and Texas are similar, substituting the word *object* for *subject*. The Constitutions of South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, and California contain similar provisions. The Constitution of New Jersey provides that, "to avoid improper influences which may result from intermixing in one and the same act such things as have no proper relation to each other, every law shall

* In considering these provisions it is important to [* 142] regard, —

1. *The evils designed to be remedied.* The Constitution of New Jersey refers to these as “the improper influences which may result from intermixing in one and the same act such things as have no proper relation to each other.” In the language of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, speaking of the former practice: “The title of an act often afforded no clue to its contents. Important general principles were found placed in acts private or local in their operation; provisions concerning matters of practice or judicial proceedings were sometimes included in the same statute with matters entirely foreign to them, the result of which was that on many important subjects the statute law had become almost unintelligible, as they whose duty it has been to examine or act under it can well testify. To prevent any further accumulation to this chaotic mass was the object of the constitutional provision under consideration.”¹ The Supreme Court of Michigan

embrace but one object, and that shall be expressed in the title.” The Constitution of Missouri contains the following provision: “No bill (except general appropriation bills, which may embrace the various subjects and accounts for and on account of which moneys are appropriated, and except bills passed under the third subdivision of section 44 of this article) shall contain more than one subject, which shall be clearly expressed in its title.” The exception secondly referred to is to bills for free public-school purposes. The Constitutions of Indiana, Oregon, and Iowa provide that “every act shall embrace but one subject, and matters properly connected therewith, which subject shall be expressed in the title. But if any subject shall be embraced in an act which shall not be expressed in the title, such act shall be void only as to so much thereof as shall not be expressed in the title.” The Constitution of Nevada provides that “every law enacted by the legislature shall embrace but one subject, and matters properly connected therewith, which subject shall be briefly expressed in

the title.” The Constitutions of New York and Wisconsin provide that “no private or local bill which may be passed by the legislature shall embrace more than one subject, and that shall be expressed in the title.” The Constitution of Illinois is similar to that of Ohio, with the addition of the saving clause found in the Constitution of Indiana. The provision in the Constitution of Colorado is similar to that of Missouri. In Pennsylvania the provision is that “no bill except general appropriation bills shall be passed containing more than one subject, which shall be clearly expressed in its title.” Const. of 1853. Whether the word *object* is to have any different construction from the word *subject*, as used in these provisions, is a question which may some time require discussion; but as it is evidently employed for precisely the same purpose, it would seem that it ought not to have. Compare *Hingle v. State*, 24 Ind. 28, and *People v. Lawrence*, 36 Barb. 192.

¹ *Walker v. Caldwell*, 4 La. Ann. 298. See *Fletcher v. Oliver*, 25 Ark. 298.

say : “ The history and purpose of this constitutional provision [* 143] are too well understood to require any * elucidation at our hands. The practice of bringing together into one bill subjects diverse in their nature and having no necessary connection with a view to combine in their favor the advocates of all, and thus secure the passage of several measures, no one of which could succeed upon its own merits, was one both corruptive of the legislator and dangerous to the State. It was scarcely more so, however, than another practice, also intended to be remedied by this provision, by which, through dexterous management, clauses were inserted in bills of which the titles gave no intimation, and their passage secured through legislative bodies whose members were not generally aware of their intention and effect. There was no design by this clause to embarrass legislation by making laws unnecessarily restrictive in their scope and operation, and thus multiplying their number; but the framers of the constitution meant to put an end to legislation of the vicious character referred to, which was little less than a fraud upon the public, and to require that in every case the proposed measure should stand upon its own merits, and that the legislature should be fairly satisfied of its design when required to pass upon it.”¹ The Court of Appeals of New York declare the object of this provision to be “ that neither the members of the legislature nor the people should be misled by the title.”² The Supreme Court of Iowa say : “ The intent of this provision of the constitution was, to prevent the union, in the same act, of incongruous matters, and of objects

¹ *People v. Mahaney*, 13 Mich. 494. And see *Board of Supervisors v. Heenan*, 2 Minn. 336; *Davis v. Bank of Fulton*, 31 Geo. 69; *St. Louis v. Tiefel*, 42 Mo. 578. The Constitution of Georgia provided that “ no law or ordinance shall pass containing any matter different from what is expressed in the title thereof.” In *Mayor, &c. of Savannah v. State*, 4 Geo. 38, *Lumpkin, J.*, says : “ I would observe that the traditionary history of this clause is that it was inserted in the constitution of 1798 at the instance of General James Jackson, and that its necessity was suggested by the Yazoo act. That

memorable measure of the 17th of January, 1795, as is well known, was smuggled through the legislature under the caption of an act “ for the payment of the late State troops,” and a declaration in its title of the right of the State to the unappropriated territory thereof “ for the protection and support of the frontier settlements.” The Yazoo act made a large grant of lands to a company of speculators. It constituted a prominent subject of controversy in State politics for many years.

² *Sun Mutual Insurance Co. v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 8 N. Y. 253.

Having no connection, no relation. And with this it was designed to prevent surprise in legislation, by having matter of one nature embraced in a bill whose title expressed another.”¹ And similar expressions will be found in many other reported cases.² It may therefore be assumed as settled that the purpose of these provisions was: *first*, to prevent *hodge-podge*, or “log-rolling” legislation; *second*, to prevent surprise or fraud upon the legislature by means of provisions in bills of which the titles gave no intimation, and which might therefore be overlooked and carelessly and unintentionally adopted; and, *third*, to fairly apprise the people, through such publication of legislative proceedings as is usually made, of the subjects of legislation that are being considered, in order that they may have opportunity of being heard thereon, by petition or otherwise, if they shall so desire.

2. *The particularity required in stating the object.* The general purpose of these provisions is accomplished when a law has but one general object, which is fairly indicated by its title. To require every end and means necessary or convenient for the accomplishment of this general object to be provided for by a separate act relating to that alone, would not only be unreasonable, but would actually render legislation impossible. It has accordingly been held that the title of “an act to establish a police government for the city of Detroit,” was not objectionable for its generality, and that all matters properly connected with the establishment and efficiency of such a government, including taxation for its support, and courts for the examination and trial of offenders, might constitutionally be included in the bill under this general title. Under any different ruling it was said, “the police government of a city could not be organized without a distinct act for each specific duty to be devolved upon it, and these could not be passed until a multitude of other statutes had taken the same duties from other officers before performing them. And these several statutes, fragmentary as they must necessarily be,

¹ *State v. County Judge of Davis Co.*, 2 Iowa, 282. See *State v. Silver*, 9 Nev. 227.

² See *Conner v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 5 N. Y. 293; *Davis v. State*, 7 Md. 151. The Supreme Court of Indiana also understand the

provision in the constitution of that State to be designed, among other things, to assist in the codification of the laws. *Indiana Central Railroad Co. v. Potts*, 7 Ind. 685; *Hingle v. State*, 24 Ind. 28. See *People v. Institution, &c.*, 71 Ill. 229.

would often fail of the intended object, from the inherent difficulty in expressing the legislative will when restricted to such narrow bounds.”¹ The generality of a title is therefore no objection to it, so long as it is not made a cover to legislation incongruous in itself, and which by no fair intendment can be considered as having a necessary or proper connection.² The legislature must determine for itself how broad and comprehensive shall be the object of a statute, and how much particularity shall be employed in the title in defining it.³ One thing, however, is very

¹ *People v. Mahaney*, 13 Mich. 495. See also *Morford v. Unger*, 8 Iowa, 82, and *Whiting v. Mount Pleasant*, 11 Iowa, 482; *Bright v. McCulloch*, 27 Ind. 223; *Mayor, &c. of Annapolis v. State*, 30 Md. 112; *State v. Union*, 33 N. J. 350; *Humboldt County v. Churchill Co. Commissioners*, 6 Nev. 30; *State v. Silver*, 9 Nev. 227.

² *Indiana Central Railroad Co. v. Potts*, 7 Ind. 681; *People v. Briggs*, 50 N. Y. 553; *People v. Wands*, 23 Mich. 385; *Washington Co. v. Franklin R. R. Co.*, 34 Md. 159.

³ *Woodson v. Murdock*, 22 Wall. 351. In *State v. Powers*, 14 Ind. 195, an act came under consideration, the title to which was, “An act to amend the first section of an act entitled ‘An act concerning licenses to vend foreign merchandise, to exhibit any caravan, menagerie, circus, rope and wire dancing puppet-shows, and legerdemain,’ approved June 15, 1852, and for the encouragement of agriculture, and concerning the licensing of stock and exchange brokers.” It was held that the subject of the act was licenses, and that it was not unconstitutional as containing more than one subject. But it was held also that, as the licenses which it authorized and required were specified in the title, the act could embrace no others, and consequently a provision in the act requiring concerts to be licensed was void. In *State v. County Judge of Davis County*, 2 Iowa, 280, the act in

question was entitled “An act in relation to certain State roads therein named.” It contained sixty-six sections, in which it established some forty-six roads, vacated some, and provided for the re-location of others. The court sustained the act. “The object of an act may be broader or narrower, more or less extensive; and the broader it is, the more particulars will it embrace. . . . There is undoubtedly great objection to uniting so many particulars in one act, but so long as they are of the same nature, and come legitimately under one general determination or object, we cannot say that the act is unconstitutional.” P. 284. Upon this subject see *Indiana Central Railroad Co. v. Potts*, 7 Ind. 684, where it is considered at length. Also *Brewster v. Syracuse*, 19 N. Y. 116; *Hall v. Bunte*, 20 Ind. 304; *People v. McCallum*, 1 Neb. 182; *Mauch Chunk v. McGee*, 81 Penn. St. 433. An act entitled “An act fixing the time and mode of electing State printer, defining his duties, fixing compensation, and repealing all laws coming in conflict with this act,” was sustained in *Walker v. Dunham*, 17 Ind. 483. In the *State v. Young*, 47 Ind. 150, the somewhat strict ruling was made, that provisions punishing intoxication could not be embraced in an act entitled “To regulate the sale of intoxicating liquors.” In *Kurtz v. People*, 33 Mich. 279, the constitutional provision is said to be “a very wise and wholesome provision, in-

* plain ; that the use of the words “ other purposes,” which [* 145] has heretofore been so common in the title to acts, with a view to cover any and every thing, whether connected with the main purpose indicated by the title or not, can no longer be of any avail where these provisions exist. As was said by the Supreme Court of New York in a case where these words had been made use of in the title to a local bill : “ The words ‘ for other purposes ’ must be laid out of consideration. They express nothing, and amount to nothing as a compliance with this constitutional requirement. Nothing which the act could not embrace without them can be brought in by their aid.”¹

3. *What is embraced by the title.* The repeal of a statute on a given subject, it is held, is properly connected with the subject-matter of a new statute on the same subject ; and therefore a repealing section in the new statute is valid, notwithstanding the title is silent on that subject.² So an act to incorporate a railroad * company, it has been held, may authorize [* 146] counties to subscribe to its stock, or otherwise aid the construction of the road.³ So an act to incorporate the Firemen’s

tended to prevent legislators from being entrapped into the careless passage of bills on matters foreign to the ostensible purpose of the statute as entitled. But it is not designed to require the body of the bill to be a mere repetition of the title. Neither is it intended to prevent including in the bill such means as are reasonably adapted to secure the objects indicated by the title.” And see *Morton v. The Controller*, 4 S. C. N. S. 430.

¹ *Town of Fishkill v. Fishkill and Beekman Plank Road Co.*, 22 Barb. 642. See, to the same effect, *Ryerson v. Utley*, 16 Mich. 269; *St. Louis v. Tiefel*, 42 Mo. 578. ‘An act entitled “An act to repeal certain acts therein named,” is void. *People v. Mellen*, 32 Ill. 181. An act, having for its sole object to legalize certain proceedings of the Common Council of Janesville, but entitled merely “An act to legalize and authorize the assessment of street improvements and assess-

ments,” was held not to express the subject, because failing to specify the locality. *Durkee v. Janesville*, 26 Wis. 697.

² *Gabbert v. Railroad Co.*, 11 Ind. 365. The constitution under which this decision was made required the law to contain but one subject, *and matters properly connected therewith*; but the same decision was made under the New York Constitution, which omits the words here italicized; and it may well be doubted whether the legal effect of the provision is varied by the addition of those words. See *Guilford v. Cornell*, 18 Barb. 640.

³ *Supervisors, &c. v. People*, 25 Ill. 181. So a provision for the costs on appeal from a justice, is properly connected with the subject of an act entitled “of the election and qualification of justices of the peace, and defining their jurisdiction, powers, and duties in civil cases.” *Robinson v. Skipworth*, 23 Ind. 811.

Benevolent Association may lawfully include under this title provisions for levying a tax upon the income of foreign insurance companies, at the place of its location, for the benefit of the corporation.¹ So an act to provide a homestead for widows and children was held valid, though what it provided for was the pecuniary means sufficient to purchase a homestead.² So an act "to regulate proceedings in the county court" was held to properly embrace a provision giving an appeal to the District Court, and regulating the proceedings therein on the appeal.³ So an act entitled "An act for the more uniform doing of township business" may properly provide for the organization of townships.⁴ So it is held that the changing of the boundaries of existing counties is a matter properly connected with the subject of forming new counties out of those existing.⁵ So a provision for the organization and sitting of courts in new counties is properly connected with the subject of the formation of such counties, and may be included in "an act to authorize the formation of new counties, and to change county boundaries."⁶ Many other cases are referred to in the note which will further illustrate the views of the courts upon this subject. There has been a general disposition to construe the constitutional provision liberally, rather than to embarrass legislation by a construction whose strictness is unnecessary to the accomplishment of the beneficial purposes for which it has been adopted.⁷

¹ *Firemen's Association v. Lounsbury*, 21 Ill. 511.

² *Succession of Lanzetti*, 9 La. Ann. 329.

³ *Murphey v. Menard*, 11 Tex. 673.

⁴ *Clinton v. Draper*, 14 Ind. 295.

⁵ *Haggard v. Hawkins*, 14 Ind. 299. And see *Duncombe v. Prindle*, 12 Iowa, 1.

⁶ *Brandon v. State*, 16 Ind. 197. In this case, and also in *State v. Bowers*, 14 Ind. 198, it was held that if the title to an original act is sufficient to embrace the matters covered by the provisions of an act amendatory thereof, it is unnecessary to inquire whether the title of an amendatory act would, of itself, be sufficient. And see *Morford v. Unger*, 8 Iowa, 82.

⁷ *Green v. Mayor, &c.*, R. M.

Charlt. 368; *Martin v. Broach*, 6 Geo. 21; *Protho v. Orr*, 12 Geo. 36; *Wheeler v. State*, 23 Geo. 9; *Hill v. Commissioners*, 22 Geo. 203; *Jones v. Columbus*, 25 Geo. 610; *Denham v. Holeman*, 26 Geo. 182; *Allen v. Tison*, 50 Geo. 374; *Ex parte Conner*, 51 Geo. 571; *Brieswick v. Mayor, &c. of Brunswick*, 51 Geo. 639; *People v. McCann*, 16 N. Y. 58; *Williams v. People*, 24 N. Y. 405; *People v. Allen*, 42 N. Y. 404; *Huber v. People*, 49 N. Y. 132; *People v. Rochester*, 50 N. Y. 525; *Wenzler v. People*, 58 N. Y. 516; *People v. Dudley*, 58 N. Y. 323; *People v. Quigg*, 59 N. Y. 83; *Harris v. People*, 59 N. Y. 599; *In re Flatbush*, 60 N. Y. 398; *People v. Willsea*, 60 N. Y. 507; *Railroad Co. v. Whiteneck*, 8 Ind. 217; *Wilkins v. Miller*, 9 Ind. 100;

* 4. *The effect if the title embrace more than one object.* [* 147]

Perhaps in those States where this constitutional provision

Foley v. State, 9 Ind. 363 ; Gillespie v. State, 9 Ind. 380 ; Mewherter v. Price, 11 Ind. 199 ; Reed v. State, 12 Ind. 641 ; Henry v. Henry, 13 Ind. 250 ; Igoe v. State, 14 Ind. 239 ; Sturgeon v. Hitchens, 22 Ind. 107 ; Lauer v. State, 22 Ind. 461 ; Central Plank Road Co. v. Hannaman, 22 Ind. 484 ; Garrigus v. Board of Commissioners, 39 Ind. 66 ; McCaslin v. State, 44 Ind. 151 ; Williams v. State, 48 Ind. 306 ; Jackson v. Reeves, 53 Ind. 231 ; Railroad Co. v. Gregory, 15 Ill. 20 ; Firemen's Association v. Lounsbury, 21 Ill. 511 ; Ottowa v. People, 48 Ill. 238 ; Prescott v. City of Chicago, 60 Ill. 121 ; People v. Brislin, 80 Ill. 423 ; McAunich v. Mississippi, &c. R. R. Co., 20 Iowa, 338 ; State v. Squires, 26 Iowa, 340 ; Chiles v. Drake, 2 Met. (Ky.) 146 ; Phillips v. Bridge Co., 2 Met. (Ky.) 222 ; Johnson v. Higgins, 3 Met. (Ky.) 566 ; Louisville, &c. Co. v. Ballard, 2 Met. (Ky.) 165 ; Phillips v. Covington, &c. Co., 2 Met. (Ky.) 219 ; Chiles v. Monroe, 4 Met. (Ky.) 72 ; Hind v. Rice, 10 Bush, 528 ; Cannon v. Hemphill, 7 Tex. 184 ; Battle v. Howard, 13 Tex. 345 ; Robinson v. State, 15 Tex. 311 ; Antonio v. Gould, 34 Tex. 49 ; *Ex parte* Hogg, 36 Tex. 14 ; State v. Shadle, 41 Tex. 404 ; State v. McCracken, 42 Tex. 388 ; Laefon v. Dufoe, 9 La. Ann. 329 ; State v. Harrison, 11 La. Ann. 722 ; Bosier v. Steele, 13 La. Ann. 483 ; Williams v. Payson, 14 La. Ann. 7 ; Wisners v. Monroe, 25 La. Ann. 598 ; Whited v. Lewis, 25 La. Ann. 568 ; State v. Lafayette County Court, 41 Mo. 221 ; State v. Miller, 45 Mo. 495 ; Tuttle v. Strout, 7 Minn. 465 ; State v. Gut, 13 Minn. 341 ; Stuart v. Kinsella, 14 Minn. 524 ; Mills v. Charleston, 29 Wis. 400 ; Evans v. Sharpe, 29 Wis. 564 ; Single v. Supervisors of Marathon, 38 Wis. 363 ; People v.

McCallum, 1 Neb. 182 ; Smails v. White, 4 Neb. 353 ; Cutlip v. The Sheriff, 3 W. Va. 588 ; Shields v. Bennett, 8 W. Va. 74 ; Tuscaloosa Bridge Co. v. Olmstead, 41 Ala. 9 ; Weaver v. Lapsely, 48 Ala. 224 ; *Ex parte* Upshaw, 45 Ala. 234 ; Lockhart v. Troy, 48 Ala. 579 ; Walker v. State, 49 Ala. 329 ; Simpson v. Bailey, 3 Oreg. 515 ; Pope v. Phifer, 3 Heisk. 682 ; Cannon v. Mathes, 8 Heisk. 504 ; State v. Newark, 34 N. J. 264 ; Gifford v. R. R. Co., 10 N. J. Eq. 171 ; Keller v. State, 11 Md. 525 ; Parkinson v. State, 14 Md. 184 ; Ryerson v. Utley, 16 Mich. 269 ; People v. Denahy, 20 Mich. 349 ; People v. Hurlbut, 24 Mich. 44 ; Kurtz v. People, 33 Mich. 279 ; Dorsey's Appeal, 72 Penn. St. 192 ; Allegheny County Home's Case, 77 Penn. St. 77 ; Morton v. Comptroller-General, 4 S. C. n. s. 430 ; State v. Gurney, 4 S. C. n. s. 520 ; Norman v. Curry, 27 Ark. 440 ; Division of Howard County, 15 Kan. 194 ; Commonwealth v. Drewey, 15 Grat. 1.

In Davis v. Woolnough, 9 Iowa, 104, an act entitled "An act for revising and consolidating the laws incorporating the city of Dubuque, and to establish a city court therein," was held to express by its title but one object, which was, the revising and consolidating the laws incorporating the city; and the city court, not being an unusual tribunal in such a municipality, might be provided for by the act, whether mentioned in the title or not. "An act to enable the supervisors of the city and county of New York to raise money by tax," provided for raising money to pay judgments then existing, and also any thereafter to be recovered; and it also contained the further provision, that whenever the controller of the city should have reason to

[* 148] is limited * in its operation to private and local bills, it might be held that an act was not void for embracing two or more objects which were indicated by its title, provided one of them only was of a private and local nature. It has been held in New York that a local bill was not void because embracing general provisions also ;¹ and if they may constitutionally be embraced in the act, it is presumed they may also be constitutionally embraced in the title. But if the title to the act actually indicates, and the act itself actually embraces, two distinct objects, when the constitution says it shall embrace but one, the whole act must be treated

believe that any judgment then of record or thereafter obtained had been obtained by collusion, or was founded in fraud, he should take the proper and necessary means to open and reverse the same, &c. This provision was held constitutional, as properly connected with the subject indicated by the title, and necessary to confine the payments of the tax to the objects for which the moneys were intended to be raised. *Sharp v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 31 Barb. 572. In *O'Leary v. Cook Co.*, 28 Ill. 584, it was held that a clause in an act incorporating a college, prohibiting the sale of ardent spirits within a distance of four miles, was so germane to the primary object of the charter as to be properly included within it. By the first section of "an act for the relief of the creditors of the Lockport and Niagara Falls Railroad Company," it was made the duty of the president of the corporation, or one of the directors to be appointed by the president, to advertise and sell the real and personal estate, including the franchise of the company, at public auction to the highest bidder. It was then declared that the sale should be absolute, and that it should vest in the purchaser or purchasers of the property, real or personal, of the company, all the franchise, rights, and privileges of the corporation, as fully and as absolutely as the same were then pos-

sessed by the company. The money arising from the sale, after paying costs, was to be applied, first, to the payment of a certain judgment, and then to other liens according to priority ; and the surplus, if any, was to be divided ratably among the other creditors, and then if there should be an overplus, it was to be divided ratably among the then stockholders. By the second section of the act, it was declared that the purchaser or purchasers should have the right to sell and distribute stock to the full amount which was authorized by the act of incorporation, and the several amendments thereto ; and to appoint an election, choose directors, and organize a corporation anew, with the same powers as the existing company. There was then a proviso, that nothing in the act should impair or affect the subscriptions for new stock, or the obligations or liabilities of the company which had been made or incurred in the extension of the road from Lockport to Rochester, &c. The whole act was held to be constitutional. *Mosier v. Hilton*, 15 Barb. 657. And see *Mills v. Charleton*, 29 Wis. 400, — a very liberal case ; *Erlinger v. Boneau*, 51 Ill. 94 ; *State v. Newark*, 34 N. J. 236 ; *Smith v. Commonwealth*, 8 Bush, 108 ; *State v. St Louis Cathedral*, 23 La. Ann. 720 ; *Simpson v. Bailey*, 3 Oreg. 515 ; *Neifing v. Pontiac*, 56 Ill. 172.

¹ *People v. McCann*, 16 N. Y. 58.

as void, from the manifest impossibility in the court choosing between the two, and holding the act valid as to the one and void as to the other.¹

5. *The effect where the act is broader than the title.* But if the act is broader than the title, it may happen that one part of it can stand because indicated by the title, while as to the object not indicated by the title it must fail. Some of the State constitutions, it will be perceived, have declared that this shall be the rule; but the declaration was unnecessary; as the general rule, that so much of the act as is not in conflict with the constitution must be sustained, would have required the same declaration from the courts. If by striking from the act all that relates to the object not indicated by the title, that which is left is complete in itself, sensible, capable of being executed, and wholly independent of that which is rejected, it must be sustained as constitutional. * The principal questions in each case will there- [* 149] fore be, whether the act is in truth broader than the title; and if so, then whether the other objects in the act are so intimately connected with the one indicated by the title that the portion of the act relating to them cannot be rejected, and leave a complete and sensible enactment which is capable of being executed.²

As the legislature may make the title to an act as restrictive as they please, it is obvious that they may sometimes so frame it as to preclude many matters being included in the act which might with entire propriety have been embraced in one enactment with the matters indicated by the title, but which must now be excluded because the title has been made unnecessarily restrictive. The courts cannot enlarge the scope of the title; they are vested with no dispensing power; the constitution has made the title the conclusive index to the legislative intent as to what shall have operation; it is no answer to say that the title might have been made more comprehensive, if in fact the legislature have not seen fit to make it so. Thus, "an act concerning promissory notes and bills of exchange" provided that all promissory notes, bills of

¹ Antonio v. Gould, 34 Tex. 49; State v. McCracken, 42 Tex. 383. All the cases recognize this doctrine.

² People v. Briggs, 50 N. Y. 566.

* None of the provisions of a statute should be regarded as unconstitutional where they all relate, directly or indi-

rectly, to the same subject, have a natural connection, and are not foreign to the subject expressed in the title." Phillips v. Bridge Co., 2 Met. (Ky.) 222, approved, Smith v. Commonwealth, 8 Bush, 112. See *Ex parte Upshaw*, 45 Ala. 234.

exchange, or other instruments in writing, for the payment of money, or for the delivery of specific articles, or to convey property, or to perform any other stipulation therein mentioned, should be negotiable, and assignees of the same might sue thereon in their own names. It was held that this act was void, as to all the instruments mentioned therein except promissory notes and bills of exchange;¹ though it is obvious that it would have been easy to frame a title to the act which would have embraced them all, and which would have been unobjectionable. It has also been held that an act for the preservation of the Muskogee River Improvement could not lawfully provide for the levy and collection of tolls for the payment of the expense of constructing the improvement, as the operation of the act was carefully limited by its title to the future.² So also it has been held that "an act to limit the numbers of grand jurors, and to point out the mode of their selection, defining their jurisdiction, and repealing all laws inconsistent therewith," could not constitutionally contain provisions which should authorize a defendant in a criminal case, on a trial for any offence, to be found guilty of any lesser [* 150] offence necessarily * included therein.³ These cases must suffice upon this point; though the cases before referred to will furnish many similar illustrations.

In all we have said upon this subject we have assumed the constitutional provision to be mandatory. Such has been the view of the courts almost without exception. In California, however, a different view has been taken, the court saying: "We regard this section of the constitution as merely directory; and, if we were inclined to a different opinion, would be careful how we lent ourselves to a construction which must in effect obliterate almost every law from the statute-book, unhinge the business and destroy the labor of the last three years. The first legislature that met

¹ Mewherter v. Price, 11 Ind. 199. See also State v. Young, 47 Ind. 150; Jones v. Thompson, 12 Bush, 394; Rushing v. Seabee, 12 Bush, 198; State v. Kinsella, 14 Minn. 524.

² Ryerson v. Utley, 16 Mich. 269. See further Weaver v. Lapsley, 43 Ala. 229; Tuscaloosa Bridge Co. v. Olmstead, 41 Ala. 9; Stuart v. Kinsella, 14 Minn. 524. In Cutlip v. Sheriff, 3 W. Va. 588, it was held

that if an act embraces two objects, only one of which is specified in the title, the whole is void; but this is opposed to the authorities generally.

³ Foley v. State, 9 Ind. 363; Gillespie v. State, 9 Ind. 380. See also Indiana Cent. Railroad Co. v. Potts, 7 Ind. 681; State v. Squires, 26 Iowa, 340; State v. Lafayette Co. Court, 41 Mo. 39; People v. Denahy, 20 Mich. 349.

under the constitution seems to have considered this section as directory ; and almost every act of that and the subsequent sessions would be obnoxious to this objection. The contemporaneous exposition of the first legislature, adopted or acquiesced in by every subsequent legislature, and tacitly assented to by the courts, taken in connection with the fact that rights have grown up under it, so that it has become a rule of property, must govern our decision.”¹ Similar views have also been expressed in the State of Ohio.² These cases, and especially what is said by the California court, bring forcibly before our minds a fact, which cannot be kept out of view in considering this subject, and which has a very important bearing upon the precise point which these decisions cover. The fact is this : that whatever constitutional provision can be looked upon as directory merely is very likely to be treated by the legislature as if it was devoid even of moral obligation, and to be therefore habitually disregarded. To say that a provision is directory seems, with many persons, to be equivalent to saying that it is not law at all. That this ought not to be so must be conceded ; that it is so we have abundant reason and good authority for saying. If, therefore, a constitutional provision is to be enforced at all, it must be treated as mandatory. And if the legislature habitually disregard it, it seems to us that there is all the more urgent necessity that the courts should enforce it. And it also seems to us that there are few evils which * can be [* 151] inflicted by a strict adherence to the law, so great as that which is done by the habitual disregard, by any department of the government, of a plain requirement of that instrument from which it derives its authority, and which ought, therefore, to be scrupulously observed and obeyed. Upon this subject we need only refer here to what we have said concerning it in another place.³

Amendatory Statutes.

It has also been deemed important, in some of the States, to provide by their constitutions, that “ no act shall ever be revised or amended by mere reference to its title ; but the act revised or

¹ *Washington v. Murray*, 4 Cal. 475; *Pim v. Nicholson*, 6 Ohio, n. s. 388. 177.

² *Miller v. State*, 8 Ohio, n. s. ³ *Ante*, p. *74.

section amended shall be set forth and published at full length.”¹ Upon this provision an important query arises. Does it mean that the act or section revised or amended shall be set forth and published at full length as it stood before, or does it mean only that it shall be set forth and published at full length as amended or revised? Upon this question perhaps a consideration of the purpose of the provision may throw some light. “The mischief designed to be remedied was the enactment of amendatory statutes in terms so blind that legislators themselves were sometimes deceived in regard to their effects, and the public, from the difficulty in making the necessary examination and comparison failed to become apprised of the changes made in the laws. An amendatory act which purported only to insert certain words, or to substitute one phrase for another in an act or section which was only referred to, but not published, was well calculated to mislead the careless as to its effect, and was, perhaps, sometimes drawn in that form for the express purpose. Endless confusion was thus introduced into the law, and the constitution wisely prohibited such legislation.”² If this is a correct view of the purpose of the provision, it does not seem to be at all important to its accomplishment that the old law should be republished, if the law as amended is given in full, with such reference to the old law as will show for what the new law is substituted.

[* 152] Nevertheless, * it has been decided in Louisiana that the constitution requires the old law to be set forth and pub-

¹ This is the provision as it is found in the Constitutions of Indiana, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia. In Kansas, Ohio, Michigan, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Maryland there are provisions of similar import. In Tennessee the provision is: “All acts which revive, repeal, or amend former laws, shall recite, in their caption or otherwise, the title or substance of the law repealed, revived, or amended.” Art. 1, § 17. The provision in Nebraska (Const. of 1875) is peculiar. “No law shall be amended unless the new act contains the section or sections so amended, and the section or sections so amended shall be repealed.” Art. 3, § 11.

In Texas it appears to be held that the legislature may repeal a definite portion of a section without the reenactment of the section with such portion omitted. *Chambers v. State*, 25 Tex. 307. But *quære* of this. Any portion of a section amended which is not contained in the amendatory section as set forth and published is repealed. *State v. Ingersoll*, 17 Wis. 631. Further on this subject see *Blakemore v. Dolan*, 50 Ind. 194; *People v. Wright*, 70 Ill. 388.

² *People v. Mahaney*, 13 Mich. 497. See *Mok v. Detroit, &c. Association*, 30 Mich. 511.

lished ;¹ and the courts of Indiana, assuming the provision in their own constitution to be taken from that of Louisiana after the decisions referred to had been made, at one time adopted and followed them as precedents.² It is believed, however, that the general understanding of the provision in question is different, and that it is fully complied with in letter and spirit, if the act or section revised or amended is set forth and published as revised or amended, and that any thing more only tends to render the statute unnecessarily cumbrous.³ It should be observed that statutes which amend others by implication are not within this provision ; and it is not essential that they even refer to the acts or sections which by implication they amend.⁴ But repeals by implication are not favored ; and the repugnancy between two statutes should be very clear to warrant a court in holding that the later in time repeals the other, when it does not in terms purport to do so.⁵ This rule has peculiar force in the case of laws of special and local application, which are never to be deemed repealed by general legislation except upon the most unequivocal manifestation of intent to that effect.⁶

¹ *Walker v. Caldwell*, 4 La. Ann. 297; *Heirs of Duverge v. Salter*, 5 La. Ann. 94. *Contra*, *Shields v. Bennett*, 8 W. Va. 74.

² *Langdon v. Applegate*, 5 Ind. 327; *Rogers v. State*, 6 Ind. 31. These cases were overruled in *Greencastle, &c. Co. v. State*, 28 Ind. 382.

³ See *Tuscaloosa Bridge Co. v. Olmstead*, 41 Ala. 9; *People v. Pritchard*, 21 Mich. 236; *People v. McCallum*, 1 Neb. 182; *State v. Draper*, 47 Mo. 29; *Booneville v. Trigg*, 46 Mo. 288. Under such a constitutional provision where a statute simply repeals others, it is not necessary to set them out. *Falconer v. Robinson*, 46 Ala. 340. Compare *Bird v. Wasco County*, 3 Oreg. 282.

⁴ *Spencer v. State*, 5 Ind. 41; *Branham v. Lange*, 16 Ind. 497; *People v. Mahaney*, 13 Mich. 481; *Lehman v. McBride*, 15 Ohio, n. s. 593.

⁵ See cases cited in last note; also *Naylor v. Field*, 29 N. J. 287; *State v. Berry*, 12 Iowa, 58; *Attorney-General v. Brown*, 1 Wis. 525; *Dodge*

v. Gridley, 10 Ohio, 177; *Hirn v. State*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 20; *New Orleans v. Southern Bank*, 15 La. Ann. 89; *Blain v. Bailey*, 25 Ind. 165; *Water Works Co. v. Burkhart*, 41 Ind. 364; *Swann v. Buck*, 40 Miss. 268; *Davis v. State*, 7 Md. 151; *State v. The Treasurer*, 41 Mo. 16; *Somerset and Stoytown Road*, 74 Penn. St. 61; *McCool v. Smith*, 1 Black, 459; *State v. Cain*, 8 W. Va. 720; *Fleischner v. Chadwick*, 5 Oreg. 152; *Covington v. East St. Louis*, 78 Ill. 548; *Iverson v. State*, 52 Ala. 170; *Gohen v. Texas Pacific R. R. Co.*, 2 Woods, 346; *State v. Commissioners*, 37 N. J. 240; *Attorney-General v. Railroad Companies*, 35 Wis. 425; *Rounds v. Waymart*, 81 Penn. St. 395; *Henderson's Tobacco*, 11 Wall. 652.

⁶ *Cass v. Dillon*, 2 Ohio, n. s. 607; *Fosdick v. Perrysburg*, 14 Ohio, n. s. 472; *People v. Quigg*, 59 N. Y. 83; *Clark v. Davenport*, 14 Iowa, 494; *Oleson v. Green Bay, &c. R. R. Co.*, 36 Wis. 383; *Covington v. East St. Louis*, 78 Ill. 548.

It was a parliamentary rule that a statute should not be repealed at the same session of its enactment, unless a clause permitting it was inserted in the statute itself;¹ but this rule did not apply to repeals by implication,² and it is possibly not recognized in this country at all, except where it is incorporated in the State constitution.³

Signing of Bills.

When a bill has passed the two houses, it is engrossed for the signatures of the presiding officers. This is a constitutional requirement in most of the States, and therefore cannot be dispensed with;⁴ though, in the absence of any such requirement, it would seem not to be essential.⁵ And if, by the con- [* 153] stitution of * the State, the governor is a component part of the legislature, the bill is then presented to him for his approval.

Approval of Laws.

The qualified veto power of the governor is regulated by the constitutions of those States which allow it, and little need be said here beyond referring to the constitutional provisions for information concerning them. It has been held that if the governor, by statute, was entitled to one day, previous to the adjournment of the legislature, for the examination and approval of laws, this is to be understood as a full day of twenty-four hours, before the hour of the final adjournment.⁶ It has also

¹ Dwarria on Statutes, Vol. I. p. 269; Sedgw. on Stat. and Const. Law, 122; Smith on Stat. and Const. Construction, 908.

² Ibid. And see Spencer v. State, 5 Ind. 41.

³ Spencer v. State, 5 Ind. 41; Attorney-General v. Brown, 1 Wis. 513; Smith on Stat. and Const. Construction, 908; Mobile & Ohio Railroad Co. v. State, 29 Ala. 573.

⁴ Moody v. State, 48 Ala. 115; s. c. 17 Am. Rep. 28. The bill as signed must be the same as it passed the two houses. People v. Platt, 2

S. C. N. s. 150; Legg v. Annapolis, 42 Md. 203; Brady v. West, 50 Miss. 68. But a clerical error that would not mislead is to be overlooked. People v. Supervisor of Onondaga, 16 Mich. 254. Compare Smith v. Hoyt, 14 Wis. 252, where the error was in publication.

⁵ Speer v. Plank Road Co., 22 Penn. St. 376.

⁶ Hyde v. White, 24 Tex. 137. The five days allowed in New Hampshire for the governor to return bills which have not received his assent, include days on which the legislature

been held that, in the approval of laws, the governor is a component part of the legislature, and that unless the constitution allows further time for the purpose, he must exercise his power of approval before the two houses adjourn, or his act will be void.¹ But under a provision of the Constitution of Minnesota, that the governor may approve and sign "within three days of the adjournment of the legislature any act passed during the last three days of the session," it has been held that Sundays were not to be included as a part of the prescribed time;² and under the Constitution of New York, which provided that, "if any bill shall not be returned by the governor within ten days, Sundays excepted, after it shall have been presented to him, the same shall be a law, in like manner as if he had signed it, unless the legislature shall, by their adjournment, prevent its return, in which case it shall not be a law," it was held that the governor might sign a bill after the adjournment, at any time within the ten days.³ The governor's approval is not complete until the bill has

is not in session, if it has not finally adjourned. *Opinions of Judges*, 45 N. H. 607. But the day of presenting the bill to the governor should be excluded. *Opinions of Judges*, 45 N. H. 607; *Iron Mountain Co. v. Haight*, 39 Cal. 540. As to the power of the governor, derived from long usage, to approve and sign bills after the adjournment of the legislature, see *Solomon v. Cartersville*, 41 Geo. 157.

Neither house can, without the consent of the other, recall a bill after its transmission to the governor. *People v. Devlin*, 33 N. Y. 269.

The delivery of a bill passed by the two houses to the secretary of the commonwealth according to custom, is not a presentation to the governor for his approval, within the meaning of the constitutional clause which limits him to a certain number of days after the presentation of the bill to veto it. *Opinions of the Justices*, 99 Mass. 636.

¹ *Fowler v. Peirce*, 2 Cal. 165. The court also held in this case that, notwithstanding an act purported to

have been approved before the actual adjournment, it was competent to show by parol evidence that the actual approval was not until the next day. In support of this ruling, *People v. Purdy*, 2 Hill, 31, was cited, where it was held that the court might go behind the statute-book and inquire whether an act to which a two-thirds vote was essential had constitutionally passed. That, however, would not be in direct contradiction of the record, but it would be inquiring into a fact concerning which the statute was silent, and other records supplied the needed information.

² *Stinson v. Smith*, 8 Minn. 366.

³ *People v. Bowen*, 30 Barb. 24. Where on the tenth day the governor sent a bill with his objections to the house with which it originated, but the messenger, finding the house had adjourned for the day, returned it to the governor, who retained it, it was held that to prevent the bill becoming a law it should have been left with the proper officer of the house instead of being retained by the governor. *Harpending v. Haight*, 39 Cal. 189.

[* 154] passed beyond his control * by the constitutional and customary mode of legislation ; and at any time prior to that he may reconsider and retract any approval previously made.¹ His disapproval of a bill is communicated to the house in which it originated, with his reasons ; and it is there reconsidered, and may be again passed over the veto by such vote as the constitution prescribes.²

¹ *People v. Hatch*, 19 Ill. 283. An act apportioning the representatives was passed by the legislature and transmitted to the governor, who signed his approval thereon by mistake, supposing at the time that he was subscribing one of several other bills then lying before him, and claiming his official attention ; his private secretary thereupon reported the bill to the legislature as approved, not by the special direction of the governor, nor with his knowledge or special assent, but merely in his usual routine of customary duty, the governor not being conscious that he had placed his signature to the bill until after information was brought to him of its having been reported approved ; whereupon he sent a message to the speaker of the house to which it was reported, stating that it had been inadvertently signed and not approved, and on the same day completed a veto message of the bill which was partially written at the time of signing his approval, and transmitted it to the house where the bill originated, having first erased his signature and approval. It was held that the bill had not become a law. It had never passed out of the governor's possession after it was received by him until after he had erased his signature and approval, and the court was of opinion that it did not pass from his control until it had become a law by the lapse of ten days under the constitution, or by his depositing it with his approval in the office of the secretary of state. It had long been the practice of the governor to report, formerly through the secretary of state,

but recently through his private secretary, to the house where bills originated, his approval of them ; but this was only a matter of formal courtesy, and not a proceeding necessary to the making or imparting vitality to the law. By it no act could become a law which without it would not be a law. Had the governor returned the bill itself to the house, with his message of approval, it would have passed beyond his control, and the approval could not have been retracted, unless the bill had been withdrawn by consent of the house ; and the same result would have followed his filing the bill with the secretary of state with his approval subscribed.

The Constitution of Indiana provides, art. 5, § 14, that, "if any bill shall not be returned by the governor within three days, Sundays excepted, after it shall have been presented to him, it shall be a law without his signature, unless the general adjournment shall prevent its return ; in which case it shall be a law unless the governor, within five days next after the adjournment, shall file such bill with his objections thereto, in the office of the secretary of state," &c. Under this provision it was held that where the governor, on the day of the final adjournment of the legislature, and after the adjournment, filed a bill received that day, in the office of the secretary of state, without approval or objections thereto, it thereby became a law, and he could not file objections afterwards. *Tarleton v. Peggs*, 18 Ind. 24.

² A bill which, as approved and signed, differs in important particu-

** Other Powers of the Governor.*

[* 155]

The power of the governor as a branch of the legislative department is almost exclusively confined to the approval of bills. As executive, he communicates to the two houses information concerning the condition of the State, and may recommend measures to their consideration, but he cannot originate or introduce bills. He may convene the legislature in extra session whenever extraordinary occasion seems to have arisen; but their powers when convened are not confined to a consideration of the subjects to which their attention is called by his proclamation or his message, and they may legislate on any subject as at the regular sessions.¹ An exception to this statement exists in those States where, by the express terms of the constitution, it is provided that when convened in extra session the legislature shall consider no subject

lars from the one signed, is no law. *Jones v. Hutchinson*, 43 Ala. 721.

If the governor sends back a bill which has been submitted to him, stating that he cannot act upon it because of some supposed informality in its passage, this is in effect an objection to the bill, and it can only become a law by further action of the legislature, even though the governor may have been mistaken as to the supposed informality. *Birdsall v. Carrick*, 3 Nev. 154.

In practice the veto power, although very great and exceedingly important in this country, is obsolete in Great Britain, and no king now ventures to resort to it. As the Ministry must at all times be in accord with the House of Commons, — except where the responsibility is taken of dissolving the Parliament and appealing to the people, — it must follow that any bill which the two houses have passed must be approved by the monarch. The approval has become a matter of course, and the governing power in Great Britain is substantially in the House of Commons. 1 Bl. Com. 184–185, and notes.

¹ The Constitution of Iowa, art. 4, § 11, provides that the governor “may, on extraordinary occasions, convene the General Assembly by proclamation, and shall state to both houses, when assembled, the purpose for which they have been convened.” It was held in *Morford v. Unger*, 8 Iowa, 82, that the General Assembly, when thus convened, were not confined in their legislation to the purposes specified in the message. “When lawfully convened, whether in virtue of the provision in the constitution or the governor’s proclamation, it is the ‘General Assembly’ of the State, in which the full and exclusive legislative authority of the State is vested. Where its business at such session is not restricted by some constitutional provision, the General Assembly may enact any law at a special or extra session that it might at a regular session. Its powers, not being derived from the governor’s proclamation, are not confined to the special purpose for which it may have been convened by him.”

except that for which they were specially called together, or which may have been submitted to them by special message of the governor.¹

When Acts are to take Effect.

The old rule was that statutes, unless otherwise ordered, took effect from the first day of the session on which they were [* 156] passed; ² * but this rule was purely arbitrary, based upon no good reason, and frequently working very serious injustice. The present rule is that an act takes effect from the time when the formalities of enactment are actually complete under the constitution, unless it is otherwise ordered, or unless there is some constitutional or statutory rule on the subject which prescribes otherwise.³ By the Constitution of Mississippi,⁴ "no law of a general nature, unless otherwise provided, shall be enforced until sixty days after the passage thereof." By the Constitution of Illinois,⁵ no act of the General Assembly shall take effect until the first day of July next after its passage, unless in case of emergency (which emergency shall be expressed in the

¹ Provisions to this effect will be found in the Constitutions of Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, and Nevada; perhaps in some others.

² 1 Lev. 91; *Latless v. Holmes*, 4 T. R. 660; *Smith v. Smith*, Mart. (N. C.) 26; *Hamlet v. Taylor*, 5 Jones, L. 36. This is changed by 33 Geo. III. c. 13, by which statutes since passed take effect from the day when they receive the royal assent, unless otherwise ordered therein.

³ *Mathews v. Zane*, 7 Wheat. 164; *Rathbone v. Bradford*, 1 Ala. 312; *Branch Bank of Mobile v. Murphy*, 8 Ala. 119; *Heard v. Heard*, 8 Geo. 380; *Goodsell v. Boynton*, 2 Ill. 555; *Dyer v. State*, Meigs, 237; *Parkinson v. State*, 14 Md. 184. An early Virginia case decides that "from and after the passing of this act" would exclude the day on which it was passed. *King v. Moore*, Jefferson, 9. On the other hand, it is held in some cases that a statute which takes effect from and after its passage,

has relation to the first moment of that day. *In re Welman*, 20 Vt. 653; *Mallory v. Hiles*, 4 Met. (Ky) 53; *Wood v. Fort*, 42 Ala. 641. Others hold that it has effect from the moment of its approval by the governor. *People v. Clark*, 1 Cal. 406. See *In re Wynne*, Chase, Dec. 227.

⁴ Art. 7, § 6.

⁵ Art. 3, § 23. The intention that an act shall take effect sooner must be expressed clearly and unequivocally; it is not to be gathered by intendment and inference. *Wheeler v. Chubbuck*, 16 Ill. 361. See *Hendrickson v. Hendrickson*, 7 Ind. 13.

Where an act is by its express terms to take effect after publication in a specified newspaper, every one is bound to take notice of this fact; and if before such publication negotiable paper is issued under it, the purchasers of such paper can acquire no rights thereby. *McClure v. Oxford*, 94 U. S. Rep. 429; following *George v. Oxford*, 16 Kan. 72.

preamble or body of the act) the General Assembly shall, by a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, otherwise direct. By the Constitution of Michigan,¹ no public act shall take effect, or be in force, until the expiration of ninety days from the end of the session at which the same is passed, unless the legislature shall otherwise direct by a two-thirds vote of the members elected to each house. These and similar provisions are designed to secure, as far as possible, the public promulgation of the law before parties are bound to take notice of and act under it, and to obviate the injustice of a rule which should compel parties at their peril to know and obey a law of which, in the nature of things, they could not possibly have heard; they give to all parties the full constitutional period in which to become acquainted with the terms of the statutes which are passed, except when the legislature has otherwise directed; and no one is bound to govern his conduct by the new law until that period has elapsed.² And the fact that, by the terms of the statute, something is to be done under it before the expiration of the constitutional period for it to take effect, will not amount to a legislative direction that the act shall take effect at that time, if the act itself is silent as to the period when it shall go into operation.³

* The Constitution of Indiana provides⁴ that "no act [* 157] shall take effect until the same shall have been published and circulated in the several counties of this State, by authority, except in case of emergency; which emergency shall be declared

¹ Art. 4, § 20.

² Price *v.* Hopkin, 13 Mich. 318. See, however, Smith *v.* Morrison, 22 Pick. 430; Stine *v.* Bennett, 13 Minn. 153. Compare State *v.* Bond, 4 Jones, L. 9. Where a law has failed to take effect for want of publication, all parties are chargeable with notice of that fact. Clark *v.* Janesville, 10 Wis. 136.

³ Supervisors of Iroquois Co. *v.* Keady, 34 Ill. 293. An act for the removal of a county seat provided for taking the vote of the electors of the county upon it on the 17th of March, 1863, at which time the legislature had not adjourned. It was not expressly declared in the act at what

time it should take effect, and it was therefore held that it would not take effect until sixty days from the end of the session, and a vote of the electors taken on the 17th of March was void. See also Rice *v.* Ruddiman, 10 Mich. 125; Rogers *v.* Vass, 6 Iowa, 405. And it was also held in the case first named, and in Wheeler *v.* Chubbuck, 16, Ill. 361, that "the direction must be made in a clear, distinct, and unequivocal provision, and could not be helped out by any sort of intendment or implication," and that the act must all take effect at once, and not by piecemeal.

⁴ Art. 4, § 28.

in the preamble, or in the body of the law." Unless the emergency is thus declared, it is plain that the act cannot take earlier effect.¹ But the courts will not inquire too nicely into the mode of publication. If the laws are distributed in bound volumes, in a manner and shape not substantially contrary to the statute on that subject, and by the proper authority, it will be held sufficient, notwithstanding a failure to comply with some of the directory provisions of the statute on the subject of publication.²

The Constitution of Wisconsin, on the other hand, provides³ that "no general law shall be in force until published;" thus leaving the time when it should take effect to depend, not alone upon the legislative direction, but upon the further fact of publication. But what shall be the mode of publication seems to be left to the legislative determination. It has been held, however, that a general law was to be regarded as *published* although printed in the volume of private laws, instead of the volume of public laws as the statute of the State would require.⁴ But an unauthorized publication — as, for example, of an act for the incorporation of a city in two local papers instead of the State paper — is no publication in the constitutional sense.⁵ The Constitution of Louisiana does not in terms require laws to be published, though it provides that when they are promulgated, it shall be in the English language. There is a provision in the Civil Code that all laws shall be considered promulgated at the place where the State gazette is published, the day after the pub-

¹ *Carpenter v. Montgomery*, 7 Blackf. 415; *Hendrickson v. Hendrickson*, 7 Ind. 13; *Mark v. State*, 15 Ind. 98. The legislature must necessarily in these cases be judge of the existence of the emergency. *Carpenter v. Montgomery*, *supra*. The Constitution of Tennessee provides that "No law of a general nature shall take effect until forty days after its passage, unless the same, or the caption, shall state that the public welfare requires that it should take effect sooner." Art. 1, § 20.

² *State v. Bailey*, 16 Ind. 46. See further, as to this constitutional provision, *Jones v. Cavins*, 4 Ind. 305.

³ Art. 7, § 21.

⁴ *Matter of Boyle*, 9 Wis. 264.

Under this provision it has been decided that a law establishing a municipal court in a city is a general law. *Matter of Boyle*, *supra*. See *Eitel v. State*, 33 Ind. 201. Also a statute for the removal of a county seat. *State v. Lean*, 9 Wis. 279. Also a statute incorporating a municipality, or authorizing it to issue bonds in aid of a railroad. *Clark v. Janesville*, 10 Wis. 136. And see *Scott v. Clark*, 1 Iowa, 70. An inaccuracy in the publication of a statute, which does not change its substance or legal effect, will not invalidate the publication. *Smith v. Hoyt*, 14 Wis. 252.

⁵ *Clark v. Janesville*, 10 Wis. 136. See, further, *Mills v. Jefferson*, 20 Wis. 50.

lication of such laws in the State gazette, and in all other parts of the State thirty days after the publication. With these provisions in view, it has been held that "the promulgation of laws is an executive function. The mode of promulgation may be prescribed by the legislature, and differs in different countries and at different times. . . . Promulgation is the extrinsic act which gives a law, perfect in itself, executory force. Unless the law prescribes that it shall be executory from its passage, or from a certain date, it is presumed to be executory only from its promulgation."¹ But it is competent for the legislature to provide in an act that it shall take effect from and after its passage; and the act will have operation accordingly, though not published in the official gazette.² In Pennsylvania, whose constitution then in force also failed to require publication of laws, the publication was nevertheless held to be necessary before the act could come into operation; but, as the doings of the legislature were public, and the journals published regularly, it was held that every enactment must be deemed to be published in the sense necessary, and the neglect to publish one in the pamphlet edition of the laws would not destroy its validity.³

* The Constitution of Iowa provides that "no law of [*158] the General Assembly, passed at a regular session, of a public nature, shall take effect until the fourth day of July next after the passage thereof. Laws passed at a special session shall take effect ninety days after the adjournment of the General Assembly by which they were passed. If the General Assembly shall deem any law of immediate importance, they may provide that the same shall take effect by publication in newspapers in the State."⁴ Under this section it is not competent for the legislature to confer upon the governor the discretionary power which the constitution gives to that body, to fix an earlier day for the law to take effect.⁵

¹ State v. Ellis, 17 La. Ann. 390, 392.

² State v. Judge, 14 La. Ann. 486; Thomas v. Scott, 23 La. Ann. 689.

³ In Maryland a similar conclusion is reached. Parkinson v. State, 14 Md. 84.

⁴ Peterman v. Huling, 31 Penn. St.

432. A joint resolution of a general nature requires the same publication as any other law. State v. School Board Fund, 4 Kan. 261.

⁵ Art. 3, § 26. See Hunt v. Murray, 17 Iowa, 313.

⁶ Scott v. Clark, 1 Iowa, 70; Pilkey v. Gleason, 1 Iowa, 522.

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* CHAPTER VII.

OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH A LEGISLATIVE ENACTMENT MAY BE DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL.

WE have now examined somewhat briefly the legislative power of the State, and the bounds which expressly or by implication are set to it, and also some of the conditions necessary to its proper and valid exercise. In so doing it has been made apparent that, under some circumstances, it may become the duty of the courts to declare that what the legislature has assumed to enact is void, either from want of constitutional power to enact it, or because the constitutional forms or conditions have not been observed. In the further examination of our subject, it will be important to consider what the circumstances are under which the courts will feel impelled to exercise this high prerogative, and what precautions should be observed before assuming to do so.

It must be evident to any one that the power to declare a legislative enactment void is one which the judge, conscious of the fallibility of the human judgment, will shrink from exercising in any case where he can conscientiously and with due regard to duty and official oath decline the responsibility. The legislative and judicial are co-ordinate departments of the government, of equal dignity; each is alike supreme in the exercise of its proper functions, and cannot directly or indirectly, while acting within the limits of its authority, be subjected to the control or supervision of the other, without an unwarrantable assumption by that other of power which, by the constitution, is not conferred upon it. The constitution apportions the powers of government, but it does not make any one of the three departments subordinate to another, when exercising the trust committed to it.¹ The courts may declare legislative enactments unconstitutional and void in

¹ *Bates v. Kimball*, 2 Chip. 77; 1 H. & J. 236; *Hawkins v. Governor*, *Bailey v. Philadelphia, &c. R. R. Co.*, 1 Ark. 570; *People v. Governor*, 29 4 Harr. 402; *Whittington v. Polk*, Mich. 320; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 89.

some cases, but not because the judicial power is superior in degree or dignity to the legislative. Being required to declare what the law is in the cases which come before them, they must enforce the constitution as the paramount law, whenever a legislative * enactment comes in conflict with it.¹ But [* 160] the courts sit, not to review or revise the legislative action, but to enforce the legislative will; and it is only where they find that the legislature has failed to keep within its constitutional limits, that they are at liberty to disregard its action; and in doing so, they only do what every private citizen may do in respect to the mandates of the courts when the judges assume to act and to render judgments or decrees without jurisdiction. “In exercising this high authority, the judges claim no judicial supremacy; they are only the administrators of the public will. If an act of the legislature is held void, it is not because the judges have any control over the legislative power, but because the act is forbidden by the constitution, and because the will of the people, which is therein declared, is paramount to that of their representatives expressed in any law.”²

Nevertheless, in declaring a law unconstitutional, a court must necessarily cover the same ground which has already been covered by the legislative department in deciding upon the propriety of enacting the law, and they must indirectly overrule the decision of that co-ordinate department. The task is therefore a delicate one, and only to be entered upon with reluctance and hesitation. It is a solemn act in any case to declare that that body of men to whom the people have committed the sovereign function of making the laws for the commonwealth, have deliberately disregarded the limitations imposed upon this delegated authority, and usurped power which the people have been careful to withhold; and it is almost equally so when the act which is adjudged to be unconstitutional appears to be chargeable rather to careless and improvident action, or error in judgment, than to intentional disregard of obligation. But the duty to do this in a proper case, though at one time doubted, and by some persons persistently denied, it is now generally agreed that the courts cannot properly decline, and in its performance they seldom fail

¹ *Rice v. State*, 7 Ind. 334; *Bloodgood v. Mohawk and Hudson Railroad Co.*, 18 Wend. 53.

² *Lindsay v. Commissioners, &c.*, 2 Bay, 61.

of proper support if they proceed with due caution and circumspection, and under a proper sense as well of their own responsibility, as of the respect due to the action and judgment of the law-makers.¹

¹ There are at least two cases in American judicial history where judges have been impeached as criminals for refusing to enforce unconstitutional enactments. One of these—the case of *Trevett v. Weedon*, decided by the Superior Court of Rhode-Island in 1786—is particularly interesting as being the first case in which a legislative enactment was declared unconstitutional and void on the ground of incompatibility with the State constitution. Mr. Arnold, in his *History of Rhode Island*, Vol. II. c. 24, gives an account of this case; and the printed brief in opposition to the law, and in defence of the impeached judges, is in possession of the present writer. The act in question was one which imposed a heavy penalty on any one who should refuse to receive on the same terms as specie the bills of a bank chartered by the State, or who should in any way discourage the circulation of such bills. The penalty was made collectible on summary conviction, without jury trial; and the act was held void on the ground that jury trial was expressly given by the colonial charter, which then constituted the constitution of the State. Although the judges were not removed on impeachment, the legislature refused to re-elect them when their terms expired at the end of the year, and supplanted them by more pliant tools, by whose assistance the paper money was forced into circulation, and public and private debts extinguished by means of it. Concerning the other case, we copy from the *Western Law Monthly*, “Sketch of Hon. Calvin Pease,” Vol. V. p. 3, June, 1863: “The first session of the Supreme Court [of Ohio] under the constitution was held at

Warren, Trumbull County, on the first Tuesday of June, 1803. The State was divided into three circuits. . . . The third circuit of the State was composed of the counties of Washington, Belmont, Jefferson, Columbiana, and Trumbull. At this session of the legislature, Mr. Pease was appointed President Judge of the Third Circuit in April, 1803, and though nearly twenty-seven years old, he was very youthful in his appearance. He held the office until March 4, 1810, when he sent his resignation to Governor Huntington. . . . During his term of service upon the bench many interesting questions were presented for decision, and among them the constitutionality of some portion of the act of 1805, defining the duties of justices of the peace; and he decided that so much of the fifth section as gave justices of the peace jurisdiction exceeding \$20, and so much of the twenty-ninth section as prevented plaintiffs from recovering costs in actions commenced by original writs in the Court of Common Pleas, for sums between \$20 and \$50, were repugnant to the Constitution of the United States and of the State of Ohio, and therefore null and void. . . . The clamor and abuse to which this decision gave rise was not in the least mitigated or diminished by the circumstance that it was concurred in by a majority of the judges of the Supreme Court, Messrs. Huntington and Tod. . . . At the session of the legislature of 1807–8, steps were taken to impeach him and the judges of the Supreme Court who concurred with him; but the resolutions introduced into the house were not acted upon during the session. But the scheme was not abandoned. At an early day

* I. In view of the considerations which have been sug- [* 161] gested, the rule which is adopted by some courts, that they will not * decide a legislative act to be unconstitutional [* 162] by a majority of a bare quorum of the judges only, — less than a majority of all, — but will instead postpone the argument until the bench is full, seems a very prudent and proper precaution to be observed before entering upon questions so delicate and so important. The benefit of the wisdom and deliberation of every judge ought to be had under circumstances so grave. Something more than private rights are involved; the fundamental law of the State is in question, as well as the correctness of legislative action; and considerations of courtesy, as well as the importance of the question involved, should lead the court to decline to act at all, where they cannot sustain the legislative

of the next session, and with almost indecent haste, a committee was appointed to inquire into the conduct of the offending judges, and with leave to exhibit articles of impeachment, or report otherwise, as the facts might justify. The committee without delay reported articles of impeachment against Messrs. Pease and Tod, but not against Huntingdon, who in the mean time had been elected governor of the State. . . . The articles of impeachment were preferred by the House of Representatives on the 23d day of December, 1808. He was summoned at once to appear before the Senate as a high court of impeachment, and he promptly obeyed the summons. The managers of the prosecution on the part of the House were Thomas Morris, afterwards senator in Congress from Ohio, Joseph Sharp, James Pritchard, Samuel Marrett, and Othniel Tooker. . . . Several days were consumed in the investigation, but the trial resulted in the acquittal of the respondent." Sketch of Hon. George Tod, August number of same volume: "At the session of the legislature of 1808-9, he was impeached for concurring in decisions made by Judge Pease, in the counties of Trumbull and Jeffer-

son, that certain provisions of the act of the legislature, passed in 1805, defining the duties of justices of the peace, were in conflict with the Constitution of the United States and of the State of Ohio, and therefore void. These decisions of the courts of Common Pleas and of the Supreme Court, it was insisted, were not only an assault upon the wisdom and dignity, but also upon the supremacy of the legislature, which passed the act in question. This could not be endured; and the popular fury against the judges rose to a very high pitch, and the senator from the county of Trumbull in the legislature at that time, Calvin Cone, Esq., took no pains to soothe the offended dignity of the members of that body, or their sympathizing constituents, but pressed a contrary line of conduct. The judges must be brought to justice, he insisted vehemently, and be punished, so that others might be terrified by the example, and deterred from committing similar offences in the future. The charges against Mr. Tod were substantially the same as those against Mr. Pease. Mr. Tod was first tried, and acquitted. The managers of the impeachment, as well as the result, were the same in both cases."

action, until a full bench has been consulted, and its deliberate opinion is found to be against it. But this is a rule of propriety, not of constitutional obligation; and though generally adopted and observed, each court will regulate, in its own discretion, its practice in this particular.¹

[* 163] * II. Neither will a court, as a general rule, pass upon a constitutional question, and decide a statute to be invalid, unless a decision upon that very point becomes necessary to the determination of the cause. “While the courts cannot shun the discussion of constitutional questions when fairly presented, they will not go out of their way to find such topics. They will not seek to draw in such weighty matters collaterally, nor on trivial occasions. It is both more proper and more respectful to a co-ordinate department to discuss constitutional questions only when that is the very *lis mota*. Thus presented and deter-

¹ *Briscoe v. Commonwealth Bank of Kentucky*, 8 Pet. 118. It has been intimated that inferior courts should not presume to pass upon constitutional questions, but ought in all cases to treat statutes as valid. *Ortman v. Greenman*, 4 Mich. 291. But no tribunal can exercise judicial power, unless it is to decide according to its judgment; and it is difficult to discover any principle of justice which can require a magistrate to enter upon the execution of a statute when he believes it to be invalid, especially when he must thereby subject himself to prosecution, without any indemnity in the law if it proves to be invalid. Undoubtedly when the highest courts in the land hesitate to declare a law unconstitutional, and allow much weight to the legislative judgment, the inferior courts should be still more reluctant to exercise this power, and a becoming modesty would at least be expected of those judicial officers who have not been trained to the investigation of legal and constitutional questions. But in any case a judge or justice, being free from doubt in his own mind, and unfettered by any judicial decision properly binding upon him, must follow his

own sense of duty upon constitutional as well as upon any other questions. See *Miller v. State*, 3 Ohio, N. S. 483; *Pim v. Nicholson*, 6 Ohio, N. S. 180; *Mayberry v. Kelly*, 1 Kan. 116. In the case last cited it is said: “It is claimed by counsel for the plaintiff in error, that the point raised by the instruction is, that inferior courts and ministerial officers have no right to judge of the constitutionality of a law passed by a legislature. But is this law? If so, a court created to interpret the law must disregard the constitution in forming its opinions. The constitution is law, — the fundamental law, — and must as much be taken into consideration by a justice of the peace as by any other tribunal. When two laws apparently conflict, it is the duty of all courts to construe them. If the conflict is irreconcilable, they must decide which is to prevail; and the constitution is not an exception to this rule of construction. If a law were passed in open, flagrant violation of the constitution, should a justice of the peace regard the law, and pay no attention to the constitutional provision? If that is his duty in a plain case, is it less so when the construction becomes more difficult?”

mined, the decision carries a weight with it to which no extrajudicial disquisition is entitled.”¹ In any case, therefore, where a constitutional question is raised, though it may be legitimately presented by the record, yet if the record also presents some other and clear ground upon which the court may rest its judgment, and thereby render the constitutional question immaterial to the case, that course will be adopted, and the question of constitutional power will be left for consideration until a case arises which cannot be disposed of without considering it, and when consequently a decision upon such question will be unavoidable.²

III. Nor will a court listen to an objection made to the constitutionality of an act by a party whose rights it does not affect, and who has therefore no interest in defeating it. On this ground it has been held that the objection that a legislative act was unconstitutional, because divesting the rights of remainder-men against their will, could not be successfully urged by the owner of the particular estate, and could only be made on behalf

*of the remainder-men themselves.³ And a party who [*164] has assented to his property being taken under a statute cannot afterwards object that the statute is in violation of a provision in the constitution designed for the protection of private property.⁴ The statute is assumed to be valid, until some one complains whose rights it invades. “*Prima facie*, and on the face of the act itself, nothing will generally appear to show that the act is not valid; and it is only when some person attempts to resist its operation, and calls in the aid of the judicial power to pronounce it void, as to him, his property or his rights, that the objection of unconstitutionality can be presented and sustained. Respect for the legislature, therefore, concurs with well-established principles of law in the conclusion that such an act is not void, but voidable only; and it follows, as a necessary legal infer-

¹ *Hoover v. Wood*, 9 Ind. 287; *Ireland v. Turnpike Co.*, 19 Ohio, N. S. 873; *Smith v. Speed*, 50 Ala. 277.

² *Ex parte Randolph*, 2 Brock. 447; *Frees v. Ford*, 6 N. Y. 177, 178; *Cumberland, &c. R. R. Co. v. Barran Co. Court*, 10 Bush, 564; *White v. Scott*, 4 Barb. 56; *Mobile and Ohio Railroad Co. v. State*, 29 Ala. 573.

³ *Sinclair v. Jackson*, 8 Cow. 543. See also *Smith v. McCarthy*, 56 Penn. St. 359; *Antoni v. Wright*, 22 Grat. 857; *Marshall v. Donovan*, 10 Bush, 681.

⁴ *Embury v. Conner*, 3 N. Y. 511; *Baker v. Braman*, 6 Hill, 47; *Mobile and Ohio Railroad Co. v. State*, 29 Ala. 586; *Haskell v. New Bedford*, 108 Mass. 208.

ence from this position, that this ground of avoidance can be taken advantage of by those only who have a right to question the validity of the act, and not by strangers. To this extent only is it necessary to go, in order to secure and protect the rights of all persons against the unwarranted exercise of legislative power, and to this extent only, therefore, are courts of justice called on to interpose.”¹

IV. Nor can a court declare a statute unconstitutional and void, solely on the ground of unjust and oppressive provisions, or because it is supposed to violate the natural, social, or political rights of the citizen, unless it can be shown that such injustice is prohibited or such rights guaranteed or protected by the constitution. It is true there are some reported cases, in which judges have been understood to intimate a doctrine different from what is here asserted; but it will generally be found, on an examination of those cases, that what is said is rather by way of argument and illustration, to show the unreasonableness of putting upon constitutions such a construction as would permit legislation of the objectionable character then in question, and to induce a more cautious and patient examination of the statute, with a [* 165] view to * discover in it, if possible, some more just and reasonable legislative intent, than as laying down a rule by which courts would be at liberty to limit, according to their own judgment and sense of justice and propriety, the extent of legislative power in directions in which the constitution had imposed no restraint. Mr. Justice *Story*, in one case, in examining the extent of power granted by the charter of Rhode Island, which authorized the General Assembly to make laws in the most ample manner, “so as such laws, &c., be not contrary and repugnant unto, but as near as may be agreeable to, the laws of England, considering the nature and constitution of the place and people there,” expresses himself thus: “What is the true extent of the power thus granted must be open to explanation as well by usage as by construction of the terms in which it is given. In a government professing to regard the great rights of personal

¹ *Wellington, Petitioner*, 16 Pick. 96. And see *Hingham, &c. Turnpike Co. v. Norfolk Co.*, 6 Allen, 353; *De Jarnette v. Haynes*, 23 Miss. 600; *Sinclair v. Jackson*, 8 Cow. 543, 579; *Heyward v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 8 Barb. 489; *Matter of Albany St.*, 11 Wend. 149; *Williamson v. Carlton*, 51 Me. 449; *State v. Rich*, 20 Miss. 393; *Jones v. Black*, 48 Ala. 540.

liberty and of property, and which is required to legislate in subordination to the general laws of England, it would not lightly be presumed that the great principles of Magna Charta were to be disregarded, or that the estates of its subjects were liable to be taken away without trial, without notice, and without offence. Even if such authority could be deemed to have been confided by the charter to the General Assembly of Rhode Island, as an exercise of transcendental sovereignty before the Revolution, it can scarcely be imagined that that great event could have left the people of that State subjected to its uncontrolled and arbitrary exercise. That government can scarcely be deemed to be free, where the rights of property are left solely dependent upon the will of a legislative body, without any restraint. The fundamental maxims of a free government seem to require that the rights of personal liberty and private property should be held sacred. At least no court of justice in this country would be warranted in assuming that the power to violate and disregard them — a power so repugnant to the common principles of justice and civil liberty — lurked under any general grant of legislative authority, or ought to be implied from any general expressions of the will of the people. The people ought not to be presumed to part with rights so vital to their security and well-being, without very strong and direct expressions of such an intention.” “We know of no case in which a legislative act to transfer the property of A. to B., without his consent, has ever been held a constitutional exercise of legislative power in any State in * the Union. On the [* 166] contrary, it has been constantly resisted, as inconsistent with just principles, by every judicial tribunal in which it has been attempted to be enforced.”¹ The question discussed by the

¹ *Wilkinson v. Leland*, 2 Pet. 657. See also what is said by the same judge in *Terrett v. Taylor*, 9 Cranch, 43. “It is clear that statutes passed against plain and obvious principles of common right and common reason are absolutely null and void, so far as they are calculated to operate against those principles.” *Ham v. McClaws*, 1 Bay, 98. But the question in that case was one of construction; whether the court should give to a statute a construction which would make it

operate against common right and common reason. In *Bowman v. Middleton*, 1 Bay, 282, the court held an act which divested a man of his freehold and passed it over to another, to be void “as against common right as well as against Magna Charta.” In *Regents of University v. Williams*, 9 Gill & J. 365, it was said that an act was void as opposed to fundamental principles of right and justice inherent in the nature and spirit of the social compact. But the court

learned judge in this case is perceived to have been, What is the scope of a grant of legislative power to be exercised in conformity with the laws of England? Whatever he says is pertinent to that question; and the considerations he suggests are by way of argument to show that the power to do certain unjust and oppressive acts was not covered by the grant of legislative power. It is not intimated that if they were within the grant, they would be impliedly prohibited because unjust and oppressive.

In another case decided in the Supreme Court of New York, one of the judges, in considering the rights of the city of New York to certain corporate property, used this language: "The inhabitants of the city of New York have a vested right in the City Hall, markets, water-works, ferries, and other public property, which cannot be taken from them any more than their individual dwellings or storehouses. Their rights, in this respect, rest *not merely upon the constitution*, but upon the great principles of eternal justice which lie at the foundation of all free governments."¹ The great principles of eternal justice which affected the particular case had been incorporated in the constitution; and it therefore became unnecessary to consider what would otherwise have been the rule; nor do we understand the court as intimating any opinion upon that subject. It was sufficient for

[* 167] the case, to find * that the principles of right and justice had been recognized and protected by the constitution, and that the people had not assumed to confer upon the legislature a power to deprive the city of rights which did not come from the constitution, but from principles antecedent to and recognized by it.

So it is said by *Hosmer*, Ch. J., in a Connecticut case: "With those judges who assert the omnipotence of the legislature in all cases where the constitution has not interposed an explicit restraint, I cannot agree. Should there exist — what I know is not only an incredible supposition, but a most remote improbability — a case of direct infraction of vested rights, too palpable to be questioned and too unjust to admit of vindication, I could not avoid considering it as a violation of the social compact, and within the

had already decided that the act &c. of Baltimore *v. State*, 15 Md. was opposed, not only to the constitution of the State, but to that of the United States also. See *Mayor*, 376.

¹ *Benson v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 10 Barb. 244.

control of the judiciary. If, for example, a law were made without any cause to deprive a person of his property, or to subject him to imprisonment, who would not question its legality, and who would aid in carrying it into effect? On the other hand, I cannot harmonize with those who deny the power of the legislature, in any case, to pass laws which, with entire justice, operate on antecedent legal rights. A retrospective law may be just and reasonable, and the right of the legislature to enact one of this description I am not speculatist enough to question.”¹ The cases here supposed of unjust and tyrannical enactments would probably be held not to be within the power of any legislative body in the Union. One of them would be clearly a bill of attainder; the other, unless it was in the nature of remedial legislation, and susceptible of being defended on that theory, would be an exercise of judicial power, and therefore in excess of legislative authority, because not included in the apportionment of power made to that department. No question of implied prohibition would arise in either of these cases; but if the grant of power had covered them, and there had been no express limitation, there would, as it seems to us, be very great probability of unpleasant and dangerous conflict of authority if the courts were to deny validity to legislative action on subjects within their control, on the assumption that the legislature had disregarded justice or sound policy. The moment a court ventures to substitute its own judgment for that of the legislature, in any case where the constitution has vested the legislature with power over the subject, that moment it enters * upon a field where it is impossible to set limits [* 168] to its authority, and where its discretion alone will measure the extent of its interference.²

¹ *Goshen v. Stonington*, 4 Conn. 225.

² “If the legislature should pass a law in plain and unequivocal language, within the general scope of their constitutional powers, I know of no authority in this government to pronounce such an act void, merely because, in the opinion of the judicial tribunals, it was contrary to the principles of natural justice; for this would be vesting in the court a latitudinarian authority which might be abused,

and would necessarily lead to collisions between the legislative and judicial departments, dangerous to the well-being of society, or at least not in harmony with the structure of our ideas of natural government.” Per *Rogers, J.*, in *Commonwealth v. McCloskey*, 2 Rawle, 374. “All the courts can do with odious statutes is to chasten their hardness by construction. Such is the imperfection of the best human institutions, that, mould them as we may, a large dis-

The rule of law upon this subject appears to be, that, except where the constitution has imposed limits upon the legislative power, it must be considered as practically absolute, whether it operate according to natural justice or not in any particular case. The courts are not the guardians of the rights of the people of the State, except as those rights are secured by some constitutional provision which comes within the judicial cognizance. The protection against unwise or oppressive legislation, within constitutional bounds, is by an appeal to the justice and patriotism of the representatives of the people. If this fail, the people in their sovereign capacity can correct the evil; but courts cannot assume their rights.¹ The judiciary can only arrest the execution of a statute when it conflicts with the constitution. It cannot run a race of opinions upon points of right, reason, and expediency with the law-making power.² Any legislative act which does not encroach upon the powers apportioned to the other departments of the government, being *prima facie* valid, must be enforced, unless restrictions upon the legislative authority can be pointed out in the constitution, and the case shown to come within them.³

cretion must at last be reposed somewhere. The best and in many cases the only security is in the wisdom and integrity of public servants, and their identity with the people. Governments cannot be administered without committing powers in trust and confidence." *Beebe v. State*, 6 Ind. 528, per *Stuart*, J. And see *Johnston v. Commonwealth*, 1 Bibb, 603; *Flint River Steamboat Co. v. Foster*, 5 Geo. 194; *State v. Kruttschnitt*, 4 Nev. 178; *Walker v. Cincinnati*, 21 Ohio, n. s. 14; *Hills v. Chicago*, 60 Ill. 86.

¹ *Bennett v. Bull*, Baldw. 74; *Walker v. Cincinnati*, 21 Ohio, n. s. 14. "If the act itself is within the scope of their authority, it must stand, and we are bound to make it stand, if it will upon any intendment. It is its effect, not its purpose, which must determine its validity. Nothing but a clear violation of the constitution — a clear usurpation of power prohibited — will justify the judicial department in pronouncing an act of the legisla-

tive department unconstitutional and void." *Pennsylvania R. R. Co. v. Riblet*, 66 Penn. St. 164, 169. See *Weber v. Reinhard*, 73 Penn. St. 370; *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Smith*, 62 Ill. 268; *People v. Albertson*, 55 N. Y. 50; per *Allen*, J., *Martin v. Dix*, 52 Miss. 52, 64; per *Chalmers*, J., *Bennett v. Boggs*, Baldw. 60, 74; *United States v. Brown*, 1 Deady, 566; *Commonwealth v. Moore*, 25 Grat. 951; *Danville v. Pace*, 25 Grat. 1, 8; *Munn v. Illinois*, 94 U. S. Rep. 113.

² *Perkins*, J., in *Madison and Indianapolis Railroad Co. v. Whiteneck*, 8 Ind. 222; *Bull v. Read*, 13 Grat. 98, per *Lee*, J.

³ *Sill v. Village of Corning*, 15 N. Y. 303; *Varick v. Smith*, 5 Paige, 137; *Cochran v. Van Surlay*, 20 Wend. 365; *Morris v. People*, 3 Denio, 381; *Wynehamer v. People*, 13 N. Y. 430; *People v. Supervisors of Orange*, 17 N. Y. 235; *Dow v. Norris*, 4 N. H. 16; *Derby Turnpike Co. v.*

* V. If the courts are not at liberty to declare statutes [* 169] void because of their apparent injustice or impolicy, neither can they do so because they appear to the minds of the judges to violate fundamental principles of republican government, unless it shall be found that those principles are placed beyond legislative encroachment by the constitution. The principles of republican government are not a set of inflexible rules, vital and active in the constitution, though unexpressed, but they are subject to variation and modification from motives of policy and public necessity; and it is only in those particulars in which experience has demonstrated any departure from the settled practice to work injustice or confusion, that we shall discover an incorporation of them in the constitution in such form as to make them definite rules of action under all circumstances. It is undoubtedly a maxim of republican government, as we understand it, that taxation and representation should be inseparable; but where the legislature interferes, as in many cases it may do, to compel taxation by a municipal corporation for local purposes, it is evident

Parks, 10 Conn. 522, 543; Hartford Bridge Co. v. Union Ferry Co., 29 Conn. 210; Holden v. James, 11 Mass. 396; Norwich v. County Commissioners, 13 Pick. 60; Dawson v. Shaver, 1 Blackf. 206; Beauchamp v. State, 6 Blackf. 305; Doe v. Douglass, 8 Blackf. 10; Maize v. State, 4 Ind. 342; Stocking v. State, 7 Ind. 327; Beebe v. State, 6 Ind. 528; Newland v. Marsh, 19 Ill. 376, 384; Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Smith, 62 Ill. 268; Gutman v. Virginia Iron Co., 5 W. Va. 22; Osborn v. Staley, 5 W. Va. 85; Yancy v. Yancy, 5 Heisk. 353; Bliss v. Commonwealth, 2 Litt. 90; State v. Ashley, 1 Ark. 513; Campbell v. Union Bank, 6 How. (Miss.) 672; Tate's Ex'r v. Bell, 4 Yerg. 206; Andrews v. State, 3 Heisk. 165; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 8; Whittington v. Polk, 1 Harr. & J. 236; Norris v. Abingdon Academy, 7 Gill & J. 7; Harrison v. State, 22 Md. 491; State v. Lyles, 1 McCord, 238; Myers v. English, 9 Cal. 341; *Ex parte* Newman, 9 Cal. 502; Hobart v. Supervisors, 17 Cal.

23; Crenshaw v. Slate River Co., 6 Rand. 245; Lewis v. Webb, 3 Me. 326; Durham v. Lewiston, 4 Me. 140; Lunt's Case, 6 Me. 412; Scott v. Smart's Ex'rs, 1 Mich. 306; Williams v. Detroit, 2 Mich. 560; Tyler v. People, 8 Mich. 320; Weimer v. Bunbury, 30 Mich. 201; Cotton v. Commissioners of Leon County, 6 Fla. 610; State v. Robinson, 1 Kan. 27; Santo v. State, 2 Iowa, 165; Morrison v. Springer, 15 Iowa, 304; Stoddart v. Smith, 5 Binn. 355; Moore v. Houston, 3 S. & R. 169; Braddee v. Brownfield, 2 W. & S. 271; Harvey v. Thomas, 10 Watts, 63; Commonwealth v. Maxwell, 27 Penn. St. 456; Lewis's Appeal, 67 Penn. St. 153; Butler's Appeal, 73 Penn. St. 448; Carey v. Giles, 9 Geo. 253; Macon and Western Railroad Co. v. Davis, 13 Geo. 68; Franklin Bridge Co. v. Wood, 14 Geo. 80; Boston v. Cummins, 16 Geo. 102; Van Horne v. Dorrance, 2 Dall. 309; Calder v. Bull, 3 Dall. 386; Cooper v. Telfair, 4 Dall. 18; Fletcher v. Peck, 6 Cranch, 128.

that this maxim is applied in the case in a much restricted [* 170] and very imperfect sense only, since the * representation of the locality taxed is but slight in the body imposing the tax, and the burden may be imposed, not only against the protest of the local representative, but against the general opposition of the municipality. The property of women is taxable, notwithstanding they are not allowed a voice in choosing representatives.¹ The maxim is not entirely lost sight of in such cases, but its application in the particular case, and the determination how far it can properly and justly be made to yield to considerations of policy and expediency, must rest exclusively with the law-making power, in the absence of any definite constitutional provisions so embodying the maxim as to make it a limitation upon legislative authority.² It is also a maxim of republican government that local concerns shall be managed in the local districts, which shall choose their own administrative and police officers, and establish for themselves police regulations; but this maxim is subject to such exceptions as the legislative power of the State shall see fit to make; and when made, it must be presumed that the public interest, convenience, and protection are subserved thereby.³ The State may interfere to establish new regulations against the will of the local constituency; and if it shall think proper in any case to assume to itself those powers of local police which should be executed by the people immediately concerned, we must suppose it has been done because the local

¹ *Wheeler v. Wall*, 6 Allen, 558; *Smith v. Macon*, 20 Ark. 17.

² "There are undoubtedly fundamental principles of morality and justice which no legislature is at liberty to disregard, but it is equally undoubted that no court, except in the clearest cases, can properly impute the disregard of those principles to the legislature. . . . This court can know nothing of public policy except from the constitution and the laws, and the course of administration and decision. It has no legislative powers. It cannot amend or modify any legislative acts. It cannot examine questions as expedient or inexpedient, as politic or

impolitic. Considerations of that sort must in general be addressed to the legislature. Questions of policy there are concluded here." *Chase*, Ch. J., in *License Tax Cases*, 5 Wall. 469. "All mere questions of expediency, and all questions respecting the just operations of the law within the limits prescribed by the constitution, were settled by the legislature when it was enacted." *Ladd*, J., in *Perry v. Keene*, 56 N. H. 514, 530. And see remarks of *Ryan*, Ch. J., in *Attorney-General v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 35 Wis. 425, 580.

³ *People v. Draper*, 15 N. Y. 547. See *post*, pp. *191, *192.

administration has proved imperfect and inefficient, and a regard to the general well-being has demanded the change. In these cases the maxims which have prevailed in the government address themselves to the wisdom of the legislature, and to adhere to them as far as possible is doubtless to keep in the path of wisdom ; but they do not constitute restrictions so as to warrant the other departments in treating the exceptions which are made as unconstitutional.¹

¹ In *People v. Mahaney*, 13 Mich. 500, where the Metropolitan Police Act of Detroit was claimed to be unconstitutional on various grounds, the court say : “ Besides the specific objections made to the act as opposed to the provisions of the constitution, the counsel for respondent attacks it on ‘ general principles,’ and especially because violating fundamental principles in our system, that governments exist by consent of the governed, and that taxation and representation go together. The taxation under the act, it is said, is really in the hands of a police board, a body in the choice of which the people of Detroit have no voice. This argument is one which might be pressed upon the legislative department with great force, if it were true in point of fact. But as the people of Detroit are really represented throughout, the difficulty suggested can hardly be regarded as fundamental. They were represented in the legislature which passed the act, and had the same proportionate voice there with the other municipalities in the State, all of which receive from that body their powers of local government, and such only as its wisdom shall prescribe within the constitutional limit. They were represented in that body when the present police board were appointed by it, and the governor, who is hereafter to fill vacancies, will be chosen by the State at large, including their city. There is nothing in the maxim that taxation and representation go together which requires that the body paying the tax

shall alone be consulted in its assessment; and if there were, we should find it violated at every turn in our system. The State legislature not only has a control in this respect over inferior municipalities, which it exercises by general laws, but it sometimes finds it necessary to interpose its power in special cases to prevent unjust or burdensome taxation, as well as to compel the performance of a clear duty. The constitution itself, by one of the clauses referred to, requires the legislature to exercise its control over the taxation of municipal corporations, by restricting it to what that body may regard as proper bounds. And municipal bodies are frequently compelled most unwillingly to levy taxes for the payment of claims, by the judgments or mandates of courts in which their representation is quite as remote as that of the people of Detroit in this police board. It cannot therefore be said that the maxims referred to have been entirely disregarded by the legislature in the passage of this act. But as counsel do not claim that, in so far as they have been departed from, the constitution has been violated, we cannot, with propriety, be asked to declare an act void on any such general objection.” And see *Wynehamer v. People*, 13 N. Y. 429, per *Selden*, J.; *Benson v. Mayor, &c. of Albany*, 24 Barb. 256 *et seq.*; *Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 376; *People v. Draper*, 15 N. Y. 532; *White v. Stamford*, 37 Conn. 587.

[* 171] * VI. Nor are the courts at liberty to declare an act void, because in their opinion it is opposed to a *spirit* supposed to pervade the constitution, but not expressed in words. "When the fundamental law has not limited, either in terms or by necessary implication, the general powers conferred upon the legislature, we cannot declare a limitation under the notion of having discovered something in the *spirit* of the constitution which is not even mentioned in the instrument."¹ "It is difficult," says Mr. Senator Verplanck, "upon any general principles, to limit the omnipotence of the sovereign legislative power by judicial interposition, except so far as the express words of a written constitution give that authority. There are indeed many *dicta* and some great authorities holding that acts contrary to the

first principles of right are void. The principle is un-
[* 172] questionably * sound as the governing rule of a legislature in relation to its own acts, or even those of a preceding legislature. It also affords a safe rule of construction for courts, in the interpretation of laws admitting of any doubtful construction, to presume that the legislature could not have intended an unequal and unjust operation of its statutes. Such a construction ought never to be given to legislative language if it be susceptible of any other more conformable to justice; but if the words be positive and without ambiguity, I can find no authority for a court to vacate or repeal a statute on that ground alone. But it is only in express constitutional provisions, limiting legislative power and controlling the temporary will of a majority, by a permanent and paramount law, settled by the deliberate wisdom of the nation, that I can find a safe and solid ground for the authority of courts of justice to declare void any legislative enactment. Any assumption of authority beyond this would be to place in the hands of the judiciary powers too great and too undefined either for its own security or the protection of private rights. It is therefore a most gratifying circumstance to the friends of regulated liberty, that in every change in their constitutional polity which has yet taken place here, whilst political power has been more widely diffused among the people, stronger and better-defined guards have been given to the rights of property." And after quoting certain express limitations, he pro-

¹ *People v. Fisher*, 24 Wend. 220; *State v. Staten*, 6 Cold. 233; *Walker v. Cincinnati*, 21 Ohio, N. S. 14.

ceeds: "Believing that we are to rely upon these and similar provisions as the best safeguards of our rights, as well as the safest authorities for judicial direction, I cannot bring myself to approve of the power of courts to annul any law solemnly passed, either on an assumed ground of its being contrary to natural equity, or from a broad, loose, and vague interpretation of a constitutional provision beyond its natural and obvious sense."¹

The accepted theory upon this subject appears to be this: In every sovereign State there resides an absolute and uncontrolled power of legislation. In Great Britain this complete power rests in the Parliament: in the American States it resides in the people themselves as an organized body politic. But the people, by *creating the Constitution of the United States, have [* 173] delegated this power as to certain subjects, and under certain restrictions to the Congress of the Union; and that portion they cannot resume, except as it may be done through amendment of the national Constitution. For the exercise of the legislative power, subject to this limitation, they create, by their State constitution, a legislative department upon which they confer it; and granting it in general terms, they must be understood to grant the whole legislative power which they possessed, except so far as at the same time they saw fit to impose restrictions. While, therefore, the Parliament of Britain possesses completely the absolute and uncontrolled power of legislation, the legislative bodies of the American States possess the same power, except, *first*, as it may have been limited by the Constitution of the United States; and, *second*, as it may have been limited by the constitution of the State. A legislative act cannot, therefore, be declared void, unless its conflict with one of these two instruments can be pointed out.²

It is to be borne in mind, however, that there is a broad difference between the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the States as regards the powers which may be exercised under them. The government of the United States

¹ *Cochran v. Van Surlay*, 20 Wend. 381-383. See also *People v. Gallagher*, 4 Mich. 244; *Benson v. Mayor, &c. of Albany*, 24 Barb. 252 *et seq.*; *Grant v. Courter*, 24 Barb. 232; *Wynehamer v. People*, 13 N. Y. 391, per *Comstock, J.*; 13 N. Y. 453, per *Selden, J.*; 13 N. Y. 477, per *Johnson, J.*

² *People v. New York Central Railroad Co.*, 34 Barb. 138; *Gentry v. Griffith*, 27 Tex. 461; *Danville v. Pace*, 25 Grat. 1; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 663. And see the cases cited, *ante*, p. *168, note 8.

is one of *enumerated* powers ; the governments of the States are possessed of all the general powers of legislation. When a law of Congress is assailed as void, we look in the national Constitution to see if the grant of specified powers is broad enough to embrace it ; but when a State law is attacked on the same ground, it is presumably valid in any case, and this presumption is a conclusive one, unless in the Constitution of the United States or of the State we are able to discover that it is prohibited. We look in the Constitution of the United States for *grants* of legislative power, but in the constitution of the State to ascertain if any *limitations* have been imposed upon the complete power with which the legislative department of the State was vested in its creation. Congress can pass no laws but such as the Constitution authorizes either expressly or by clear implication ; while the State legislature has jurisdiction of all subjects on which its legislation is not prohibited.¹ “The law-making power of

[* 174] the * State,” it is said in one case, “recognizes no restraints, and is bound by none, except such as are imposed by the constitution. That instrument has been aptly termed a legislative act by the people themselves in their sovereign capacity, and is therefore the paramount law. Its object is not to grant legislative power, but to confine and restrain it. Without the constitutional limitations, the power to make laws would be absolute. These limitations are created and imposed by express words, or arise by necessary implication. The leading feature of the constitution is the separation and distribution of the powers of the government. It takes care to separate the executive, legislative, and judicial powers, and to define their limits. The executive can do no legislative act, nor the legislature any executive act, and neither can exercise judicial authority.”²

It does not follow, however, that in every case the courts, before they can set aside a law as invalid, must be able to find in the constitution some specific inhibition which has been disre-

¹ Sill v. Village of Corning, 15 La. Ann. 190; Walpole v. Elliott, 18 N. Y. 303; People v. Supervisors of Orange, 27 Barb. 593; People v. Gallagher, 4 Mich. 244; Sears v. Cottrell, 5 Mich. 257; People v. New York Central Railroad Co., 24 N. Y. 497, 504; People v. Toynbee, 2 Park. Cr. R. 490; State v. Gutierrez, 15 La. Ann. 190; Walpole v. Elliott, 18 Ind. 258; Smith v. Judge, 17 Cal. 547; Commonwealth v. Hartman, 17 Penn. St. 119; Kirby v. Shaw, 19 Penn. St. 260; Weister v. Hade, 52 Penn. St. 477; Danville v. Pace, 25 Grat. 1, 9; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 663.

² Sill v. Corning, 15 N. Y. 303.

garded, or some express command which has been disobeyed.¹ Prohibitions are only important where they are in the nature of exceptions to a general grant of power; and if the authority to do an act has not been granted by the sovereign to its representative, it cannot be necessary to prohibit its being done. If in one department was vested the whole power of the government, it might be essential for the people, in the instrument delegating this complete authority, to make careful and particular exception of all those cases which it was intended to exclude from its cognizance; for without such exception the government might do whatever the people themselves, when met in their sovereign capacity, would have power to do. But when only the legislative power is delegated to one department, and the judicial to another, it is not important that the one should be expressly forbidden to try causes, or the other to make laws. The assumption of judicial power by the legislature in such a case is unconstitutional, because, though not expressly forbidden, it is nevertheless *inconsistent with the provisions [* 175] which have conferred upon another department the power the legislature is seeking to exercise.² And for similar reasons a legislative act which should undertake to make a judge the arbiter in his own controversies would be void, because, though in form a provision for the exercise of judicial power, in substance it would be the creation of an arbitrary and irresponsible authority, neither legislative, executive, nor judicial, and wholly unknown to constitutional government.³ It could not be necessary to forbid the judiciary to render judgment without suffering the party to make defence; because it is implied in judicial authority that there shall be a hearing before condemnation.⁴ Taxation cannot be arbitrary, because its very definition includes apportionment, nor can it be for a purpose not public, because that would be a

¹ A remarkable case of evasion to avoid the purpose of the constitution, and still keep within its terms, was considered in *People v. Albertson*, 55 N. Y. 50. In *Taylor v. Commissioners of Ross County*, 23 Ohio, n. s. 22, the Supreme Court of Ohio found itself under the necessity of declaring that that which was forbidden by the constitution could no more be done indirectly than directly.

² *Ante*, pp. *87-*114, and cases cited.

³ *Post*, pp. *410-*413, and cases cited.

⁴ *Post*, pp. *353-*354. On this subject in general, reference is made to those very complete recent works, *Bigelow on Estoppel* and *Freeman on Judgments*.

contradiction in terms.¹ The right of local self-government cannot be taken away, because all our constitutions assume its continuance as the undoubted right of the people, and as an inseparable incident to republican government.² The bills of rights in the American constitutions forbid that parties shall be deprived of property except by the law of the land; but if the prohibition had been omitted, a legislative enactment to pass one man's property over to another would nevertheless be void. If the act proceeded upon the assumption that such other person was justly entitled to the estate, and therefore it was transferred, it would be void, because judicial in its nature; and if it proceeded without reasons, it would be equally void, as neither legislative nor judicial, but a mere arbitrary fiat.³ There is no difficulty in saying that any such act, which under pretence of exercising one power is usurping another, is opposed to the constitution and void. It is assuming a power which the people, if they have not granted it at all, have reserved to themselves. The maxims of Magna Charta and the common law are the interpreters of constitutional grants of power, and those acts which by those maxims the several departments of government are forbidden to do cannot be considered within any grant or apportionment of power which the people in general terms have made to those departments. The Parliament of Great Britain, [* 176] indeed, as possessing the sovereignty * of the country, has the power to disregard fundamental principles, and pass arbitrary and unjust enactments; but it cannot do this rightfully, and it has the power to do so simply because there is no written

¹ *Post*, ch. 14. And see *Curtis v. Whipple*, 24 Wis. 350; *Tyson v. School Directors*, 51 Penn. St. 9; *Freeland v. Hastings*, 10 Allen, 575; *Opinions of Judges*, 58 Me. 590; *People v. Batchellor*, 53 N. Y. 128; *Lowell v. Boston*, 111 Mass. 454.

² *People v. Mayor, &c. of Chicago*, 51 Ill. 31; *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 Mich. 44.

³ *Bowman v. Middleton*, 1 Bay, 252; *Wilkinson v. Leland*, 2 Pet. 657; *Terrett v. Taylor*, 9 Cranch, 43; *Ervine's Appeal*, 16 Penn. St. 266. "It is now considered an universal and fundamental proposition in every well-

regulated and properly administered government, whether embodied in a constitutional form or not, that private property cannot be taken for a strictly private purpose at all, nor for public without a just compensation; and that the obligation of contracts cannot be abrogated or essentially impaired. These and other vested rights of the citizen are held sacred and inviolable, even against the plenitude of power in the legislative department." *Nelson, J.*, in *People v. Morris*, 13 Wend. 328. See *Bank of Michigan v. Williams*, 5 Wend. 486.

constitution from which its authority springs or on which it depends, and by which the courts can test the validity of its declared will. The rules which confine the discretion of Parliament within the ancient landmarks are rules for the construction of the powers of the American legislatures; and however proper and prudent it may be expressly to prohibit those things which are not understood to be within the proper attributes of legislative power, such prohibition can never be regarded as essential, when the extent of the power apportioned to the legislative department is found upon examination not to be broad enough to cover the obnoxious authority. The absence of such prohibition cannot, by implication, confer power.

Nor, where fundamental rights are declared by the constitution, is it necessary at the same time to prohibit the legislature, in express terms, from taking them away. The declaration is itself a prohibition, and is inserted in the constitution for the express purpose of operating as a restriction upon legislative power.¹ Many things, indeed, which are contained in the bills of rights to be found in the American constitutions, are not, and from the very nature of the case cannot be, so certain and definite in character as to form rules for judicial decisions; and they are declared rather as guides to the legislative judgment than as marking an absolute limitation of power. The nature of the declaration will generally enable us to determine without difficulty whether it is the one thing or the other. If it is declared that all men are free, and no man can be slave to another, a definite and certain rule of action is laid down, which the courts can administer; but if it be said that "the blessings of a free government can only be maintained by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue," we should not be likely to commit the mistake of supposing that this declaration would authorize the courts to substitute their own view of justice for that which may have impelled the legislature to pass a particular law, or to inquire into the moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue of its members, with a view to set aside their action, if it should appear to have been influenced by the opposite qualities. It is plain that *what in [* 177] the one case is a rule, in the other is an admonition ad-

¹ Beebe v. State, 6 Ind. 518. This principle is very often acted upon when not expressly declared.

dressed to the judgment and the conscience of all persons in authority, as well as of the people themselves.

So the forms prescribed for legislative action are in the nature of limitations upon its authority. The constitutional provisions which establish them are equivalent to a declaration that the legislative power shall be exercised under these forms, and shall not be exercised under any other. A statute which does not observe them will plainly be ineffectual.¹

Statutes unconstitutional in Part.

It will sometimes be found that an act of the legislature is opposed in some of its provisions to the constitution, while others, standing by themselves, would be unobjectionable. So the forms observed in passing it may be sufficient for some of the purposes sought to be accomplished by it, but insufficient for others. In any such case the portion which conflicts with the constitution, or in regard to which the necessary conditions have not been observed, must be treated as a nullity. Whether the other parts of the statute must also be adjudged void because of the association must depend upon a consideration of the object of the law, and in what manner and to what extent the unconstitutional portion affects the remainder. A statute, it has been said, is judicially held to be unconstitutional, because it is not within the scope of legislative authority; it may either propose to accomplish something prohibited by the constitution, or to accomplish some lawful, and even laudable object, by means repugnant to the Constitution of the United States or of the State.² A statute may contain some such provisions, and yet the same act, having received the sanction of all branches of the legislature, and being in the form of law, may contain other useful and salutary provisions, not obnoxious to any just constitutional exception. It would be inconsistent with all just principles of constitutional law to adjudge these enactments void, because they are associated in the same act, but not connected with or dependent on others

¹ See *ante*, p. *130 *et seq.*

² *Commonwealth v. Clapp*, 5 Gray, 100. "A law that is unconstitutional is so because it is either an assumption of power not legislative in its

nature, or because it is inconsistent with some provision of the federal or State constitution." *Woodworth, J.*, in *Commonwealth v. Maxwell*, 27 Penn. St. 456.

which are unconstitutional.¹ Where, therefore, a part of a * statute is unconstitutional, that fact does not author- [* 178] ize the courts to declare the remainder void also, unless all the provisions are connected in subject-matter, depending on each other, operating together for the same purpose, or otherwise so connected together in meaning, that it cannot be presumed the legislature would have passed the one without the other.² The constitutional and unconstitutional provisions may even be contained in the same section, and yet be perfectly distinct and separable, so that the first may stand though the last fall. The point is not whether they are contained in the same section; for the distribution into sections is purely artificial; but whether they are essentially and inseparably connected in substance.³ If, when the unconstitutional portion is stricken out, that which remains is complete in itself, and capable of being executed in accordance

¹ *Commonwealth v. Clapp*, 5 Gray, 100. See, to the same effect, *Fisher v. McGirr*, 1 Gray, 1; *Warren v. Mayor, &c. of Charlestown*, 2 Gray, 84; *Wellington, Petitioner*, 16 Pick. 95; *Commonwealth v. Hitchings*, 5 Gray, 482; *Commonwealth v. Pomeroy*, 5 Gray, 486; *State v. Copeland*, 3 R. I. 33; *State v. Snow*, 3 R. I. 64; *Armstrong v. Jackson*, 1 Blackf. 374; *Clark v. Ellis*, 2 Blackf. 248; *McCulloch v. State*, 11 Ind. 432; *People v. Hill*, 7 Cal. 97; *Lathrop v. Mills*, 19 Cal. 513; *Rood v. McCargar*, 49 Cal. 117; *Supervisors of Knox Co. v. Davis*, 63 Ill. 405; *Myers v. People*, 67 Ill. 503; *Thomson v. Grand Gulf Railroad Co.*, 3 How. (Miss.) 240; *Campbell v. Union Bank*, 6 How. (Miss.) 625; *Mobile and Ohio Railroad Co. v. State*, 29 Ala. 573; *Santo v. State*, 2 Iowa, 165; *State v. Cox*, 3 Eng. 436; *Mayor, &c. of Savannah v. State*, 4 Geo. 26; *Exchange Bank v. Hines*, 3 Ohio, n. s. 1; *Robinson v. Bank of Darien*, 18 Geo. 65; *State v. Wheeler*, 25 Conn. 290; *People v. Lawrence*, 36 Barb. 190; *Williams v. Payson*, 14 La. Ann. 7; *Ely v. Thompson*, 3 A. K. Marsh. 70; *Davis v. State*, 7 Md. 151; *State v. Commissioners of Balti-*

more, 29 Md. 521; *Hagerstown v. Dechert*, 32 Md. 369; *Berry v. Baltimore, &c. R. R. Co.*, 41 Md. 446; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 69; *State v. Clark*, 54 Mo. 17; *Lowndes Co. v. Hunter*, 49 Ala. 507; *Isom v. Mississippi, &c. R. R. Co.*, 36 Miss. 300; *Bank of Hamilton v. Dudley's Lessee*, 2 Pet. 526. "To the extent of the collision and repugnancy, the law of the State must yield; and to that extent, and no further, it is rendered by such repugnancy inoperative and void." *Commonwealth v. Kimball*, 24 Pick. 361, per *Shaw*, Ch. J.; *Norris v. Boston*, 4 Met. 288; *Eckhart v. State*, 5 W. Va. 515.

² *Commonwealth v. Hitchings*, 5 Gray, 485. See *People v. Briggs*, 50 N. Y. 566. Although a proviso is ineffectual because unconstitutional, it cannot be disregarded when the intention of the legislature is in question. *Commonwealth v. Potts*, 79 Penn. St. 164.

³ *Commonwealth v. Hitchings*, 5 Gray, 485; *Willard v. People*, 5 Ill. 470; *Eells v. People*, 5 Ill. 512; *Robinson v. Bidwell*, 22 Cal. 379; *State v. Easterbrook*, 3 Nev. 173; *Hagerstown v. Dechert*, 32 Md. 369.

with the apparent legislative intent, wholly independent of that which was rejected, it must be sustained. The difficulty is in determining whether the good and bad parts of the statute are capable of being separated within the meaning of this rule. If a statute attempts to accomplish two or more objects, and is void as to one, it may still be in every respect complete and valid as to the other. But if its purpose is to accomplish a single object only, and some of its provisions are void, the whole must fail unless sufficient remains to effect the object without the aid of the invalid portion.¹ And if they are so mutually connected

¹ *Santo v. State*, 2 Iowa, 165. But perhaps the doctrine of sustaining one part of a statute when the other is void was carried to an extreme in this case. A prohibitory liquor law had been passed which was not objectionable on constitutional grounds, except that the last section provided that "the question of prohibiting the sale and manufacture of intoxicating liquor" should be submitted to the electors of the State, and if it should appear "that a majority of the votes cast as aforesaid, upon said question of prohibition, shall be for the prohibitory liquor law, then this act shall take effect on the first day of July, 1855." The court held this to be an attempt by the legislature to shift the exercise of legislative power from themselves to the people, and therefore void; but they also held that the remainder of the act was complete without this section, and must therefore be sustained on the rule above given. The reasoning of the court by which they are brought to this conclusion is ingenious; but one cannot avoid feeling, especially after reading the dissenting opinion of Chief Justice *Wright*, that by the decision the court gave effect to an act which the legislature did not design should take effect unless the result of the unconstitutional submission to the people was in its favor. See also *Weir v. Cram*, 37 Iowa, 649. For a similar ruling, see *Maize v. State*, 4 Ind.

342; overruled in *Meshmeier v. State*, 11 Ind. 482. And see *State v. Dombaugh*, 20 Ohio, n. s. 173, where it was held competent to construe a part of an act held to be valid by another part adjudged unconstitutional, though the court considered it "quite probable" that if the legislature had supposed they were without power to adopt the void part of the act, they would have made an essentially different provision by the other. See also *People v. Bull*, 46 N. Y. 68, where part of an act was sustained which probably would not have been adopted by the legislature separately. It must be obvious in any case where part of an act is set aside as unconstitutional, that it is unsafe to indulge in the same extreme presumptions in support of the remainder that are allowable in support of a complete act when some cause of invalidity is suggested to the whole of it. In the latter case, we know the legislature designed the whole act to have effect, and we should sustain it if possible; in the former, we do not know that the legislature would have been willing that a part of the act should be sustained if the remainder were held void, and there is generally a presumption more or less strong to the contrary. While, therefore, in the one case the act should be sustained unless the invalidity is clear, in the other the whole should fall unless it is manifest the portion not opposed to the constitution can

with and *dependent on each other, as conditions, con- [* 179] siderations, or compensations for each other, as to warrant the belief that the legislature intended them as a whole, and if all could not be carried into effect, the legislature would not pass the residue independently, then if some parts are unconstitutional, all the provisions which are thus dependent, conditional, or connected must fall with them.¹

It has accordingly been held where a statute submitted to the voters of a county the question of the removal of their county seat, and one section imposed the forfeiture of certain vested rights in case the vote was against the removal, that this portion of the act being void, the whole must fall, inasmuch as the whole was submitted to the electors collectively, and the threatened forfeiture would naturally affect the result of the vote.²

And, where a statute annexed to the city of Racine certain lands previously in the township of Racine, but contained an express provision that the lands so annexed should be taxed at a different and less rate than other lands in the city; the latter provision being held unconstitutional, it was also held that the whole statute must fail, inasmuch as such provision was clearly intended as a compensation for the annexation.³

And where a statute, in order to obtain a jury of six persons, * provided for the summoning of twelve jurors, [* 180] from whom six were to be chosen and sworn, and under the constitution the jury must consist of twelve, it was held that the provision for reducing the number to six could not be rejected and the statute sustained, inasmuch as this would be giving to it a construction and effect different from that the legislature designed; and would deprive the parties of the means of obtaining impartial jurors which the statute had intended to give.⁴

stand by itself, and that in the legislative intent it was not to be controlled or modified in its construction and effect by the part which was void.

¹ *Warren v. Mayor, &c of Charleston*, 2 Gray, 99; *State v. Commissioners of Perry County*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 507; *Slauson v. Racine*, 13 Wis. 398; *Allen County Commissioners v. Silvers*, 22 Ind. 491; *Garrard Co. Court v. Navigation Co.*, 10 Am. Law Reg. n. s. 160; *Eckhart v. State*, 5 W. Va. 515.

² *State v. Commissioners of Perry County*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 507. And see *Jones v. Robbins*, 8 Gray, 338; *Monroe v. Collins*, 17 Ohio, n. s. 666, 684; *Taylor v. Commissioners of Ross County*, 23 Ohio, n. s. 22, 84.

³ *Slauson v. Racine*, 13 Wis. 398, followed in *State v. Dousman*, 28 Wis. 547.

⁴ *Campau v. Detroit*, 14 Mich. 272. See *Commonwealth v. Potts*, 79 Penn. St. 164.

On the other hand, — to illustrate how intimately the valid and invalid portions of a statute may be associated, — a section of the criminal code of Illinois provided that “if any person shall harbor or secrete any negro, mulatto, or person of color, the same being a slave or servant, owing service or labor to any other persons, whether they reside in this State or in any other State, or Territory, or district, within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States, or shall in any wise hinder or prevent the lawful owner or owners of such slaves or servants from re-taking them in a lawful manner, every person so offending shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor,” &c., and it was held that, although the latter portion of the section was void within the decision in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*,¹ yet that the first portion, being a police regulation for the preservation of order in the State, and important to its well-being, and capable of being enforced without reference to the rest, was not affected by the invalidity of the rest.²

A legislative act may be entirely valid as to some classes of cases, and clearly void as to others. A general law for the punishment of offences, which should endeavor to reach, by its retroactive operation, acts before committed, as well as to prescribe a rule of conduct for the citizen in the future, would be void so far as it was retrospective, but such invalidity would not affect the operation of the law in regard to the cases which were within the legislative control. A law might be void as violating the obligation of existing contracts, but valid as to all contracts which should be entered into subsequent to its passage, and which therefore would have no legal force except such as the law itself would allow.³ In any such case the unconstitutional law must operate as far as it can,⁴ and it will not be held invalid on

¹ 16 Pet. 539.

² *Willard v. People*, 5 Ill. 470; *Eells v. People*, 5 Ill. 512. See *Hagerstown v. Dechert*, 32 Md. 369.

³ *Mundy v. Monroe*, 1 Mich. 68; *Cargill v. Power*, 1 Mich. 369. In *People v. Rochester*, 50 N. Y. 525, certain commissioners were appointed to take for a city hall, either lands belonging to the city or lands of individuals. The act made no provision for compensation. The commissioners

elected to take lands belonging to the city. Held, that the act was not wholly void for the omission to provide compensation in case the lands of individuals had been selected.

⁴ *Baker v. Braman*, 6 Hill, 47. The case of *Sadler v. Langham*, 34 Ala. 333, appears to be opposed to this principle, but it also appears to us to be based upon cases which are not applicable.

the objection * of a party whose interests are not affected [* 181] by it in a manner which the constitution forbids. If there are any exceptions to this rule, they must be of cases only where it is evident, from a contemplation of the statute and of the purpose to be accomplished by it, that it would not have been passed at all, except as an entirety, and that the general purpose of the legislature will be defeated if it shall be held valid as to some cases and void as to others.

Waiving a Constitutional Objection.

There are cases where a law in its application to a particular case must be sustained, because the party who makes objection has, by prior action, precluded himself from being heard against it. Where a constitutional provision is designed for the protection solely of the property rights of the citizen, it is competent for him to waive the protection, and to consent to such action as would be invalid if taken against his will. On this ground it has been held that an act appropriating the private property of one person for the private purposes of another, on compensation made, was valid if he whose property was taken assented thereto; and that he did assent and waive the constitutional privilege, if he received the compensation awarded, or brought an action to recover it.¹ So if an act providing for the appropriation of property for a public use shall authorize more to be taken than the use requires, although such act would be void without the owner's assent, yet with it all objection on the ground of unconstitutionality is removed.² And where parties were authorized by statute to erect a dam across a river, provided they should first execute a bond to the people conditioned to pay such damages as each and every person might sustain in consequence of the erection of the dam, the damages to be assessed by a justice of the peace, and the dam was erected and damages assessed as provided by the statute, it was held, in an action on the bond to recover those damages, that the party erecting the dam and who

¹ Baker v. Braman, 6 Hill, 47.

Ohio Railroad Co. v. State, 29 Ala.

² Embury v. Conner, 3 N. Y. 511.

586; Detmold v. Drake, 46 N. Y.

And see Heyward v. Mayor, &c. of 318.

New York, 8 Barb. 489; Mobile and

had received the benefit of the statute, was precluded by his action from contesting its validity, and could not insist upon his right to a common-law trial by jury.¹ In these and the [*182] like cases the statute must be read with * an implied proviso that the party to be affected shall assent thereto; and such consent removes all obstacle, and lets the statute in to operate the same as if it had in terms contained the condition.² In criminal cases, however, the doctrine that a constitutional privilege may be waived must be true to a very limited extent only. A party may consent to waive rights of property, but the trial and punishment for public offences are not within the province of individual consent or agreement.

Judicial Doubts on Constitutional Questions.

It has been said by an eminent jurist, that when courts are called upon to pronounce the invalidity of an act of legislation, passed with all the forms and ceremonies requisite to give it the force of law, they will approach the question with great caution, examine it in every possible aspect, and ponder upon it as long as deliberation and patient attention can throw any new light upon the subject, and never declare a statute void, unless the nullity and invalidity of the act are placed, in their judgment, beyond reasonable doubt.³ A reasonable doubt must be solved in favor of the legislative action, and the act be sustained.⁴

¹ *People v. Murray*, 5 Hill, 468. See *Lee v. Tillotson*, 24 Wend. 339.

² *Embury v. Conner*, 3 N. Y. 518. And see *Matter of Albany St.*, 11 Wend. 149; *Chamberlain v. Lyell*, 3 Mich. 448; *Beecher v. Baldy*, 7 Mich. 488; *Mobile and Ohio Railroad Co. v. State*, 29 Ala. 586; *Detmold v. Drake*, 46 N. Y. 318; *Haskell v. New Bedford*, 108 Mass. 208.

³ *Wellington, Petitioner*, 16 Pick. 95, per *Shaw*, Ch. J. See *Brown v. Buzan*, 24 Ind. 194. If an act may be valid or not according to the circumstances, a court would be bound to presume that such circumstances existed as would render it valid. *Talbot v. Hudson*, 16 Gray, 417.

⁴ *Cooper v. Telfair*, 4 Dall. 18; *Dow v. Norris*, 4 N. H. 16; *Flint River Steamboat Co. v. Foster*, 5 Geo. 194; *Carey v. Giles*, 9 Geo. 253; *Macon and Western Railroad Co. v. Davis*, 13 Geo. 68; *Franklin Bridge Co. v. Wood*, 14 Geo. 80; *Kendall v. Kingston*, 5 Mass. 524; *Foster v. Essex Bank*, 16 Mass. 245; *Norwich v. County Commissioners of Hampshire*, 13 Pick. 61; *Hartford Bridge Co. v. Union Ferry Co.*, 29 Conn. 227; *Rich v. Flanders*, 39 N. H. 312; *Eason v. State*, 6 Eng. 481; *Hedley v. Commissioners of Franklin Co.*, 4 Blackf. 116; *Stocking v. State*, 7 Ind. 327; *La Fayette v. Jenners*, 10 Ind. 79; *Ex parte McCollum*, 1 Cow. 564; *Contant*

“The question whether a law be void for its repugnancy to the constitution is at all times a question of much delicacy, which ought seldom, if ever, to be decided in the affirmative in a doubtful case. The court when impelled by duty to render such a judgment would be unworthy of its station could it be unmindful * of the solemn obligation which that station [*183] imposes; but it is not on slight implication and vague conjecture that the legislature is to be pronounced to have transcended its powers, and its acts to be considered as void. The opposition between the constitution and the law should be such that the judge feels a clear and strong conviction of their incompatibility with each other.”¹ Mr. Justice *Washington* gives a reason for this rule, which has been repeatedly recognized in other cases which we have cited. After expressing the opinion that the particular question there presented, and which regarded the constitutionality of a State law, was involved in difficulty and doubt, he says: “But if I could rest my opinion in favor of the constitutionality of the law on which the question arises, on no other ground than this doubt so felt and acknowledged, that alone would, in my estimation, be a satisfactory vindication of it. It is but a decent respect due to the wisdom, the integrity, and the patriotism of the legislative body by which any law is passed, to presume in favor of its validity, until its violation of the constitution is proved beyond all reasonable doubt.”²

The constitutionality of a law, then, is to be presumed, because the legislature, which was first required to pass upon the question, acting, as they must be deemed to have acted, with integrity, and with a just desire to keep within the restrictions laid

v. People, 11 Wend. 511; *Clark v. People*, 26 Wend. 606; *Morris v. People*, 3 Denio, 381; *N. Y., &c. R. R. Co. v. Van Horn*, 57 N. Y. 473; *Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 376; *Cotton v. Commissioners of Leon Co.*, 6 Fla. 610; *Cheney v. Jones*, 14 Fla. 587; *Lane v. Dorman*, 4 Ill. 238; *Newland v. Marsh*, 19 Ill. 381; *Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank v. Smith*, 3 S. & R. 63; *Weister v. Hade*, 52 Penn. St. 477; *Sears v. Cottrell*, 5 Mich. 251; *People v. Tyler*, 8 Mich. 320; *Allen County Commissioners v. Silvers*, 22 Ind. 491; *State v. Robin-*

son, 1 Kan. 17; *Eyre v. Jacob*, 14 Grat. 426; *Gormley v. Taylor*, 44 Geo. 76; *State v. Cape Girardeau, &c. R. R. Co.*, 48 Mo. 468; *Oleson v. Railroad Co.*, 36 Wis. 383; *Newsom v. Cocke*, 44 Miss. 352; *Slack v. Jacob*, 8 W. Va. 612; *Commonwealth v. Moore*, 25 Grat. 951.

¹ *Fletcher v. Peck*, 6 Cranch, 128, per *Marshall*, Ch. J.

² *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 270. See *Kellogg v. State Treasurer*, 44 Vt. 356, 359; *Slack v. Jacob*, 8 W. Va. 612.

by the constitution upon their action, have adjudged that it is so. They are a co-ordinate department of the government with the judiciary, invested with very high and responsible duties, as to some of which their acts are not subject to judicial scrutiny, and they legislate under the solemnity of an official oath, which it is not to be supposed they will disregard. It must, therefore, be supposed that their own doubts of the constitutionality of their action have been deliberately solved in its favor, so that the courts may with some confidence repose upon their conclusion, as one based upon their best judgment. For although it is plain, upon the authorities, that the courts should sustain legislative action when not clearly satisfied of its invalidity, it is equally plain in reason that the legislature should abstain from adopting such action if not fully assured of their authority to do so.

Respect for the instrument under which they exercise [* 184] their power should impel the *legislature in every case to solve their doubts in its favor, and it is only because we are to presume they do so, that courts are warranted in giving weight in any case to their decision. If it were understood that legislators refrained from exercising their judgment, or that, in cases of doubt, they allowed themselves to lean in favor of the action they desired to accomplish, the foundation for the cases we have cited would be altogether taken away.¹

As to what the doubt shall be upon which the court is to act, we conceive that it can make no difference whether it springs from an endeavor to arrive at the true interpretation of the constitution, or from a consideration of the law after the meaning of the constitution has been judicially determined. It has sometimes been supposed that it was the duty of the court, first, to interpret the constitution, placing upon it a construction that must remain unvarying, and then test the law in question by it; and that any other rule would lead to differing judicial decisions, if the legislature should put one interpretation upon the constitution at one time and a different one at another. But the decided cases do not sanction this rule,² and the difficulty suggested is rather imaginary than real, since it is but reasonable to expect

¹ See upon this subject what is New York, 5 Sandf. 14; Clark v. said in Osbourn v. Staley, 5 W. Va. People, 26 Wend. 606; Baltimore 85. v. State, 15 Md. 457.

² Sun Mutual Insurance Co. v.

that, where a construction has once been placed upon a constitutional provision, it will be followed afterwards, even though its original adoption may have sprung from deference to legislative action rather than from settled convictions in the judicial mind.¹

The duty of the court to uphold a statute when the conflict between it and the constitution is not clear, and the implication which must always exist that no violation has been intended by the legislature, may require it in some cases, where the meaning of the constitution is not in doubt, to lean in favor of such a construction of the statute as might not at first view seem most obvious and natural. For as a conflict between the statute and the constitution is not to be implied, it would seem to follow, where the meaning of the constitution is clear, *that the court, if possible, must give the statute such a construction as will enable it to have effect.* This is only saying, in another form of words, that the court must construe the statute in accordance with the legislative *intent; since it is always to be pre-[* 185]sumed the legislature designed the statute to take effect, and not to be a nullity.

The rule upon this subject is thus stated by the Supreme Court of Illinois: “Whenever an act of the legislature can be so construed and applied as to avoid conflict with the constitution and give it the force of law, such construction will be adopted by the courts. Therefore, acts of the legislature, in terms retrospective, and which, literally interpreted, would invalidate and destroy vested rights, are upheld by giving them prospective operation only; for, applied to, and operating upon, future acts and transactions only, they are rules of property under and subject to which the citizen acquires property rights, and are obnoxious to no constitutional limitation; but as retroactive laws, they reach to and destroy *existing* rights, through force of the legislative will, without a hearing or judgment of law. So will acts of the legislature, having elements of limitation, and capable of being so applied and administered, although the words are broad enough to, and do, literally read, strike at the right itself, be construed to limit and control the remedy; for as such they are valid, but as weapons destructive of vested rights they are void; and such

¹ People v. Blodgett, 13 Mich. 162.

force only will be given the acts as the legislature could impart to them.”¹

The Supreme Court of New Hampshire, a similar question being involved, recognizing their obligation “so to construe every act of the legislature as to make it consistent, if it be possible, with the provisions of the constitution,” proceed to the examination of a statute by the same rule, “without stopping to inquire what construction might be warranted by the natural import of the language used.”²

And it is said by *Harris, J.*, delivering the opinion of the majority of the Court of Appeals of New York: “A legislative act is not to be declared void upon a mere conflict of interpretation between the legislative and the judicial power. Before proceeding to annul, by judicial sentence, what has been enacted by the law-making power, it should clearly appear that the act cannot

be supported by any reasonable intendment or allowable [* 186] presumption.”³ And this after all is only * the application of the familiar rule, that in the exposition of a statute it is the duty of the court to seek to ascertain and carry out the intention of the legislature in its enactment, and to give full effect to such intention; and they are bound so to construe the statute, if practicable, as to give it force and validity, rather than to avoid it, or render it nugatory.⁴

The rule is not different when the question is whether any portion of a statute is void, than when the whole is assailed. The excess of power, if there is any, is the same in either case, and is not to be applied in any instance.

And on this ground it has been held that where the repealing clause in an unconstitutional statute repeals all inconsistent acts, the repealing clause is to stand and have effect, notwithstanding the invalidity of the rest.⁵ But other cases hold that such repealing clause is to be understood as designed to repeal all conflicting provisions, in order that those of the new statute can have effect; and that if the statute is invalid, nothing can conflict with it, and

¹ *Newland v. Marsh*, 19 Ill. 384. See also *Bigelow v. West Wisconsin R. R. Co.*, 27 Wis. 478; *Attorney-General v. Eau Claire*, 37 Wis. 400.

² *Dow v. Norris*, 4 N. H. 17. See *Dubuque v. Illinois Cent R. R. Co.*, 39 Iowa, 56.

³ *People v. Supervisors of Orange*, 17 N. Y. 241.

⁴ *Clarke v. Rochester*, 24 Barb. 471. See *Marshall v. Grimes*, 41 Miss. 27.

⁵ *Meshmeier v. State*, 11 Ind. 489; *Ely v. Thompson*, 8 A. K. Marsh. 70.

therefore nothing is repealed.¹ Great caution is necessary in some cases, or the rule which was designed to ascertain and effectuate the legislative intent will be pressed to the extreme of giving effect to part of a statute exclusively, when the legislative intent was that the part should not stand except as a component part of the whole.

Inquiry into Legislative Motives.

From what examination has been given to this subject, it appears that whether a statute is constitutional or not is always a question of power; that is, a question whether the legislature in the particular case, in respect to the subject-matter of the act, the manner in which its object is to be accomplished, and the mode of enacting it, has kept within the constitutional limits and observed the constitutional conditions. In any case in which this question is answered in the affirmative, the courts are not at liberty to inquire into the proper exercise of the power. They must assume that legislative discretion has been properly exercised.² * If evidence was required, it must be supposed [* 187] that it was before the legislature when the act was passed;³ and if any special finding was required to warrant the passage of the particular act, it would seem that the passage of the act itself might be held equivalent to such finding.⁴ And although it has

¹ *Shepardson v. Milwaukee and Beloit Railroad Co.*, 6 Wis. 605; *State v. Judge of County Court*, 11 Wis. 50; *Tims v. State*, 26 Ala. 165; *Sullivan v. Adams*, 3 Gray, 476; *Devoy v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 35 Barb. 264; *Campau v. Detroit*, 14 Mich. 276; *Childs v. Shower*, 18 Iowa, 261; *Harbeck v. New York*, 10 Bosw. 366.

² *People v. Lawrence*, 36 Barb. 193; *People v. New York Central Railroad Co.*, 34 Barb. 137; *Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 376; *Goddin v. Crump*, 8 Leigh, 154.

³ *De Camp v. Eveland*, 19 Barb. 81; *Lusher v. Scites*, 4 W. Va. 11.

⁴ *Johnson v. Joliet and Chicago Railroad Co.*, 23 Ill. 207. The Constitution of Illinois provided that

“corporations not possessing banking powers or privileges may be formed under general laws, but shall not be created by special acts, except for municipal purposes, and in cases where, in the judgment of the General Assembly, the objects of the corporation cannot be attained under general laws.” A special charter being passed without any legislative declaration that its object could not be attained under a general law, the Supreme Court sustained it, but placed their decision mainly on the ground that the clause had been wholly disregarded, “and it would now produce far-spread ruin to declare such acts unconstitutional and void.” It is very clearly intimated in the opinion, that the legislative prac-

sometimes been urged at the bar that the courts ought to inquire into the motives of the legislature where fraud and corruption were alleged, and annul their action if the allegation were established, the argument has in no case been acceded to by the judiciary, and they have never allowed the inquiry to be entered upon.¹ The

tice, and this decision sustaining it, did violence to the intent of the constitution. A provision in the Constitution of Indiana that "no act shall take effect until the same shall have been published and circulated in the several counties of this State, by authority, except in case of emergency," adds the words, "which emergency shall be declared in the preamble, or in the body of the law;" thus clearly making the legislative declaration necessary. *Carpenter v. Montgomery*, 7 Blackf. 415; *Mark v. State*, 15 Ind. 98; *Hendrickson v. Hendrickson*, 7 Ind. 13.

¹ *Sunbury and Erie Railroad Co. v. Cooper*, 33 Penn. St. 278; *Ex parte Newman*, 9 Cal. 502; *Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 376; *Johnson v. Higgins*, 3 Met. (Ky.) 566. "The courts cannot impute to the legislature any other but public motives for their acts." *People v. Draper*, 15 N. Y. 545, per *Denio*, Ch. J. "We are not made judges of the motives of the legislature, and the court will not usurp the inquisitorial office of inquiry into the *bona fides* of that body in discharging its duties." *Shankland, J.*, in the same case, p. 555. "The powers of the three departments are not merely equal; they are exclusive in respect to the duties assigned to each. They are absolutely independent of each other. It is now proposed that one of the three powers shall institute an inquiry into the conduct of another department, and form an issue to try by what motives the legislature were governed in the enactment of a law. If this may be done, we may also inquire by what motives the executive is induced to

approve a bill or withhold his approval, and in case of withholding it corruptly, by our mandate compel its approval. To institute the proposed inquiry would be a direct attack upon the independence of the legislature, and a usurpation of power subversive of the constitution." *Wright v. Defrees*, 8 Ind. 302, per *Gookins, J.* "We are not at liberty to inquire into the motives of the legislature. We can only examine into its power under the constitution." Per *Chase, Ch. J.*, in *Ex parte McCordle*, 7 Wall. 514. The same doctrine is restated by Mr. Justice *Hunt*, in *Doyle v. Continental Ins. Co.*, 94 U. S. Rep. 535; *Albany Law Journal*, Vol. XV. p. 267. And see *McCulloch v. State*, 11 Ind. 431; *Bradshaw v. Omaha*, 1 Neb. 16; *Lyon v. Norris*, 15 Geo. 480; *People v. Flagg*, 46 N. Y. 401; *Slack v. Jacob*, 8 W. Va. 612, 635; *State v. Cardozo*, 5 S. C. n. s. 297; *Humboldt County v. Churchill County Comm'rs*, 6 Nev. 30; *Flint, &c. Plank Road Co. v. Woodhull*, 25 Mich. 103; *State v. Fagan*, 22 La. Ann. 545; *State v. Hays*, 49 Mo. 607. In *Jones v. Jones*, 12 Penn. St. 350, the general principle was recognized, and it was decided not to be competent to declare a legislative divorce void for fraud. It was nevertheless held competent to annul it, on the ground that it had been granted (as shown by parol evidence) for a cause which gave the legislature no jurisdiction. The legislature was regarded as being for the purpose a court of limited jurisdiction. In *Attorney-General v. Supervisors of Lake Co.*, 33 Mich. 11, it is decided that when supervisors and people, having full

reasons are the same here as those which preclude an inquiry into the motives of the governor in the exercise of a discretion vested in him exclusively. He is responsible for his acts in such a case not to the courts, but to the people.¹

* *Consequences if a Statute is Void.*

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When a statute is adjudged to be unconstitutional, it is as if it had never been. Rights cannot be built up under it; contracts which depend upon it for their consideration are void; it constitutes a protection to no one who has acted under it, and no one can be punished for having refused obedience to it before the decision was made.² And what is true of an act void *in toto* is true also as to any part of an act which is found to be unconstitutional, and which, consequently, is to be regarded as having never, at any time, been possessed of any legal force.

authority over the subject, have acted upon the question of removal of a county seat, no question of motive can be gone into to invalidate their action.

¹ Attorney-General *v.* Brown, 1 Wis. 522; Wright *v.* Defrees, 8 Ind. 302.

² Strong *v.* Daniel, 5 Ind. 348; Astrom *v.* Hammond, 3 McLean, 107; Woolsey *v.* Commercial Bank, 6 McLean, 142; Detroit *v.* Martin, 34 Mich. 170; Hoover *v.* Barkhoof, 44 N. Y. 113; Clark *v.* Miller, 54 N. Y. 528; Sumner *v.* Beeler, 50 Ind. 341; Meagher *v.* Storey Co., 5 Nev. 244. But one acting as an officer under an unconstitutional law was held in Commonwealth *v.* McCombs, 56 Penn. St. 436, to be an officer *de facto*. This could hardly be so, however, if the law creating the office was unconstitutional. There can be no

officer *de facto* when there is no office. See Carleton *v.* People, 10 Mich. 250. In People *v.* Salomon, 54 Ill. 46, a ministerial officer was severely censured for presuming to disregard a law as unconstitutional. The court found it to be valid, but if they had held the contrary, the officer certainly could not have been punished for anticipating their decision in his own action. In Texas it is held that an act held unconstitutional must be deemed to have the force of law for the protection of officers acting under it up to the time of the decision declaring it void. Sessums *v.* Botts, 34 Tex. 335. If a decision adjudging a statute unconstitutional is afterwards overruled, the statute is to be considered as having been in force for the whole period. Pierce *v.* Pierce, 46 Ind. 86.

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* CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEVERAL GRADES OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

IN the examination of American constitutional law, we shall not fail to notice the care taken and the means adopted to bring the agencies by which power is to be exercised as near as possible to the subjects upon which the power is to operate.

In contradistinction to those governments where power is concentrated in one man, or one or more bodies of men, whose supervision and active control extends to all the objects of government within the territorial limits of the State, the American system is one of complete *decentralization*, the primary and vital idea of which is, that local affairs shall be managed by local authorities, and general affairs only by the central authority. It was under the control of this idea that a national constitution was formed, under which the States, while yielding to the national government complete and exclusive jurisdiction over external affairs, conferred upon it such powers only, in regard to matters of internal regulation, as seemed to be essential to national union, strength, and harmony, and without which the purpose in organizing the national authority might have been defeated. It is this, also, that impels the several States, as if by common arrangement, to subdivide their territory into counties, towns, road and school districts, and to confer upon each powers of local legislation, and also to incorporate cities, boroughs, and villages wherever a dense population renders different rules important from those which are needful for the rural districts.

The system is one which almost seems a part of the very nature of the race to which we belong. A similar subdivision of the realm for the purposes of municipal government has existed in England from the earliest ages ;¹ and in America, the first settlers,

¹ Crabbe's History of English Law, c. 2; 1 Bl. Com. 114; Hallam's Middle Ages, c. 8, pt. 1; 2 Kent, 278; Vaughan's Revolutions in English History, b. 2, c. 8; Frothingham's Rise of the Republic, 14, 15.

as if instinctively, adopted it in their frame of government, and * no other has ever supplanted it, or even found [* 190] advocates. In most of the colonies the central power created and provided for the organization of the towns;¹ in one at least the towns preceded and created the central authority;² but in all, the final result was substantially the same, that towns, villages, boroughs, cities, and counties exercised the powers of local government, and the Colony or State the powers of a more general nature.³

¹ For an interesting history of the legislation in Connecticut on this subject, see *Webster v. Harwinton*, 32 Conn. 131. In New Hampshire, see *Bow v. Allenstown*, 34 N. H. 351. The learned note to *Commonwealth v. Roxbury*, 9 Gray, 503, will give similar information concerning the organization and authority of towns in the Massachusetts provinces. And see *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 Mich. 98. Mr. Elliott well says: "The prime strength of New England and of the whole republic was and is in the municipal governments and in the homes." And he adds, that among the earliest things decided in Massachusetts was, "that trivial things should be ended in towns." (1635.) Elliott's *New England*, Vol. I. p. 182.

² Rhode Island; see Arnold's *History*, c. 7. It is remarked by this author that, when the charter of Rhode Island was suspended to bring the Colony under the dominion of Andros, "*the American system of town governments*, which necessity had compelled Rhode Island to initiate fifty years before, became the means of preserving the individual liberty of the citizen when that of the State or Colony was crushed." Arnold, Vol. I. p. 487.

³ "The townships," says De Tocqueville, "are only subordinate to the State in those interests which I shall term *social*, as they are common to all of the citizens. They are independent in all that concerns them-

selves, and among the inhabitants of New England I believe that not a man is to be found who would acknowledge that the State has any right to interfere in their local interests. The towns of New England buy and sell, prosecute or are indicted, augment or diminish their rates, without the slightest opposition on the part of the administrative authority of the State. They are bound, however, to comply with the demands of the community. If a State is in need of money, a town can neither give nor withhold the supplies. If a State projects a road, the township cannot refuse to let it cross its territory; if a police regulation is made by the State, it must be enforced by the town. A uniform system of instruction is organized all over the country, and every town is bound to establish the schools which the law ordains. . . . Strict as this obligation is, the government of the State imposes it in principle only, and in its performance the township assumes all its independent rights. Thus taxes are voted by the State, but they are assessed and collected by the township; the existence of a school is obligatory, but the township builds, pays, and superintends it. In France, the State collector receives the local imposts; in America, the town collector receives the taxes of the State. Thus the French government lends its agents to the commune; in America, the township is the agent of the government. The fact alone

The several State constitutions have been framed with this system in view, and the delegations of power which they make, and the express and implied restraints which they impose thereupon, can only be correctly understood and construed by keeping in view its present existence and anticipated continuance. There are few of the general rules of constitutional law that are not more or less affected by the fact that the powers of government, instead of being concentrated in one body of men, are carefully distributed, with a view to being exercised with intelligence, * economy, and facility, and as far as possible by the persons most directly and immediately interested.

It has already been seen that the legislature cannot delegate its power to make laws; but fundamental as this maxim is, it is so qualified by the customs of our race, and by other maxims which regard local government, that the right of the legislature, in the entire absence of authorization or prohibition, to create towns and other inferior municipal organizations, and to confer upon them the powers of local government, and especially of local taxation and police regulation usual with such corporations, would always pass unchallenged. The legislature in these cases is not regarded as delegating its authority, because the regulation of such local affairs as are commonly left to local boards and officers is not understood to belong properly to the State; and when it interferes, as sometimes it must, to restrain and control the local action, there should be reasons of State policy or dangers of local abuse to warrant the interposition.¹

shows the extent of the differences which exist between the two nations." Democracy in America, c. 5. See Frothingham's Rise of the Republic, 14-28.

¹ "It seems to be generally conceded that powers of local legislation may be granted to cities, towns, and other municipal corporations. And it would require strong reasons to satisfy us that it could have been the design of the framers of our constitution to take from the legislature a power which has been exercised in Europe by governments of all classes from the earliest history, and the exercise of which has probably done

more to promote civilization than all other causes combined; which has been constantly exercised in every part of our country from its earliest settlement, and which has raised up among us many of our most valuable institutions." *State v. Noyes*, 10 Fost. 292, per *Bell*, J. See also *Tanner v. Trustees of Albion*, 5 Hill, 121; *Dalby v. Wolf*, 14 Iowa, 228; *State v. Simonds*, 3 Mo. 414; *McKee v. McKee*, 8 B. Monr. 433; *Smith v. Levinus*, 8 N. Y. 472; *People v. Draper*, 15 N. Y. 532; *Burgess v. Pue*, 2 Gill, 11; *New Orleans v. Turpin*, 13 La. Ann. 56; *Gilkeson v. The Frederick Justices*, 13 Grat. 577;

The people of the municipalities, however, do not define for themselves their own rights, privileges, and powers, nor is there any common law which draws a definite line of distinction between the powers which may be exercised by the State, and those which must be left to the local governments.¹ The municipalities must look to the State for such charters of government as the legislature shall see fit to provide; and they cannot prescribe for themselves the details, though they have a right to expect that those charters will be granted with a recognition of the general *principles with which we are familiar. The [*192] charter, or the general law under which they exercise their powers, is their constitution, in which they must be able to show authority for the acts they assume to perform. They have no inherent jurisdiction to make laws or adopt regulations of government; they are governments of enumerated powers, acting by a delegated authority; so that while the State legislature may exercise such powers of government coming within a proper designation of legislative power as are not expressly or impliedly prohibited, the local authorities can exercise those only which are expressly or impliedly conferred, and subject to such regulations or restrictions as are annexed to the grant.²

The creation of municipal corporations, and the conferring upon them of certain powers and subjecting them to corresponding duties, does not deprive the legislature of the State of that general control over their citizens which was before possessed.

Mayor, &c. of New York v. Ryan, 2 E. D. Smith, 368; *St. Louis v. Russell*, 9 Mo. 503; *Bliss v. Kraus*, 16 Ohio, n. s. 55; *Trigally v. Memphis*, 6 Cold. 382; *Durach's Appeal*, 63 Penn. St. 491; *State v. Wilcox*, 45 Mo. 458; *Jones v. Richmond*, 18 Grat. 517; *State v. Neill*, 24 Wis. 149; *Bradley v. M'Attee*, 7 Bush, 667; s. c. 3 Am. Rep. 309; *Burckholter v. M'Connellsville*, 20 Ohio, 308; *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 Mich. 108; s. c. 9 Am. Rep. 103; *Mills v. Charleton*, 29 Wis. 415; *Commonwealth v. Coyningham*, 65 Penn. St. 76; *People v. Kelsey*, 34 Cal. 470; *Tugman v. Chicago*, 78 Ill. 405; *Manley v. Raleigh*, 4 Jones Eq. 370; *Stone v. Charlestown*, 114 Mass. 214; *Hayden v. Goodnow*, 39 Conn.

164; *Goldthwaite v. Montgomery*, 50 Ala. 486; *Cross v. Hopkins*, 6 W. Va. 323.

¹ As to the common law affecting these corporate existences, and the effect of usage, see 2 Kent, 278, 279.

² *Stetson v. Kempton*, 13 Mass. 272; *Willard v. Killingworth*, 8 Conn. 254; *Abendroth v. Greenwich*, 29 Conn. 363; *Baldwin v. North Branford*, 32 Conn. 47; *Webster v. Harwinton*, 32 Conn. 131; *Douglass v. Placerville*, 18 Cal. 643; *Lackland v. Northern Missouri Railroad Co.*, 31 Mo. 180; *Mays v. Cincinnati*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 268; *Frost v. Belmont*, 6 Allen, 152; *Hess v. Pegg*, 7 Nev. 23; *Ould v. Richmond*, 28 Grat. 464; *Youngblood v. Sexton*, 32 Mich. 406.

It still has authority to amend their charters, enlarge or diminish their powers, extend or limit their boundaries, consolidate two or more into one, overrule their legislative action whenever it is deemed unwise, impolitic, or unjust, and even abolish them altogether in the legislative discretion, and substitute those which are different.¹ The rights and franchises of such a corporation,

¹ *St. Louis v. Allen*, 13 Mo. 400; *Coles v. Madison Co.*, Breese, 115; *Richland County v. Lawrence County*, 12 Ill. 1; *Trustees of Schools v. Tattman*, 13 Ill. 27; *Robertson v. Rockford*, 21 Ill. 1; *People v. Power*, 25 Ill. 187; *St. Louis v. Russell*, 9 Mo. 503; *State v. Cowan*, 29 Mo. 330; *McKim v. Odorn*, 3 Bland. 407; *Granby v. Thurston*, 23 Conn. 416; *Harrison Justices v. Holland*, 3 Grat. 247; *Brighton v. Wilkinson*, 2 Allen, 27; *Sloan v. State*, 8 Blackf. 361; *Mills v. Williams*, 11 Ired. 558; *Langworthy v. Dubuque*, 16 Iowa, 271; *Weeks v. Milwaukee*, 10 Wis. 242; *State v. Branin*, 23 N. J. 484; *Patterson v. Society, &c.*, 24 N. J. 385; *Atchison v. Bartholow*, 4 Kan. 124; *City of St. Louis v. Cafferata*, 24 Mo. 94; *People v. Draper*, 15 N. Y. 532; *Hawkins v. Commonwealth*, 76 Penn. St. 151; *People v. Tweed*, 63 N. Y. 202; *Barnes v. District of Columbia*, 91 U. S. Rep. 540; *Laramie Co. v. Albany Co.*, 92 U. S. Rep. 307; *Aspinwall v. Commissioners, &c.*, 22 How. 364; *Howard v. McDiamid*, 26 Ark. 100; *Philadelphia v. Fox*, 64 Penn. St. 169; *Bradshaw v. Omaha*, 1 Neb. 16; *Kuhn v. Board of Education*, 4 W. Va. 499; *Sinton v. Ashbury*, 41 Cal. 530; *Hess v. Pegg*, 7 Nev. 23; *Hagerstown v. Schuer*, 37 Md. 180; *San Francisco v. Canavan*, 42 Cal. 541; *State v. Jennings*, 27 Ark. 419; *Division of Howard Co.*, 15 Kan. 194; *Martin v. Dix*, 52 Miss. 53; *Goff v. Frederick*, 44 Md. 67; *Blessing v. Galveston*, 42 Tex. 611. The legislature may in its discretion recall to itself and exercise so much of such powers as it has conferred

upon municipal corporations as is not secured to them by the constitution. *People v. Pinkney*, 32 N. Y. 377. The creditors of a county cannot prevent the legislature reducing its limits, notwithstanding their security may be diminished thereby. *Wade v. Richmond*, 18 Grat. 583. Compare *Milner v. Pensacola*, 2 Woods, 632, and *Galesburg v. Hawkinson*, 75 Ill. 152; *Rader v. Road District*, 36 N. J. 273. This power is not defeated or affected by the circumstance that the municipal corporation was by its charter made the trustee of a charity; and in such case, if the corporation is abolished, the Court of Chancery may be empowered and directed by the repealing act to appoint a new trustee to take charge of the property and execute the trust. *Montpelier v. East Montpelier*, 29 Vt. 12. And see *Harrison v. Bridgeton*, 16 Mass. 16; *Montpelier Academy v. George*, 14 La. Ann. 406; *Reynolds v. Baldwin*, 1 La. Ann. 162; *Police Jury v. Shreveport*, 5 La. Ann. 665; *Philadelphia v. Fox*, 64 Penn. St. 180; *Weymouth and Braintree Fire Commissioners v. County Commissioners*, 108 Mass. 142. As to extent of power to hold property in trust, see *Hatheway v. Sackett*, 32 Mich. 97. But neither the identity of a corporation, nor its right to take property by devise, is destroyed by a change in its name, or enlargement of its area, or an increase in the number of its corporators. *Girard v. Philadelphia*, 7 Wall. 1. Changing a borough into a city does not of itself abolish or affect the existing borough ordinances. *Trustees of Erie Academy v. City of Erie*, 31 Penn. St. 515.

being granted for the purposes of government, can never * become such vested rights as against the State that they [* 193] cannot be taken away; nor does the charter constitute a contract in the sense of the constitutional provision which prohibits the obligation of contracts being violated.¹ Restraints on the legislative power of control must be found in the constitution of the State, or they must rest alone in the legislative discretion.² If the legislative action in these cases operates inju-

Nor will it affect the indebtedness of the corporation, which will continue to be its indebtedness under its new organization. *Olney v. Harvey*, 50 Ill. 453. A general statute, containing a clause repealing all statutes contrary to its provisions, does not repeal a clause in a municipal charter on the same subject. *State v. Branin*, 23 N. J. 484.

¹ This principle was recognized by the several judges in *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 Wheat. 518. And see *People v. Morris*, 13 Wend. 331; *St. Louis v. Russell*, 9 Mo. 507; *Montpelier v. East Montpelier*, 29 Vt. 12; *Trustees of Schools v. Tatman*, 13 Ill. 30; *Brighton v. Wilkinson*, 2 Allen, 27; *Reynolds v. Baldwin*, 1 La. Ann. 162; *Police Jury v. Shreveport*, 5 La. Ann. 665; *Mt. Carmel v. Wabash County*, 50 Ill. 69; *Lake View v. Rose Hill Cemetery*, 70 Ill. 191; *Zitske v. Goldberg*, 38 Wis. 216; *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* §§ 24, 30, 37.

² See *ante*, p. *35; *post*, pp. *230, *233. "Where a corporation is the mere creature of legislative will, established for the general good and endowed by the State alone, the legislature may, at pleasure, modify the law by which it was created. For in that case there would be but one party effected. — the government itself, — and therefore not a contract within the meaning of the constitution. The trustees of such a corporation would be the mere mandatories of the State, having no personal interest involved, and could not complain of any law

that might abridge or destroy their agency." *Montpelier Academy v. George*, 14 La. Ann. 406. In *Trustees of Schools v. Tatman*, 13 Ill. 30, the court say: "Public corporations are but parts of the machinery employed in carrying on the affairs of the State; and they are subject to be changed, modified, or destroyed, as the exigencies of the public may demand. The State may exercise a general superintendence and control over them and their rights and effects, so that their property is not diverted from the uses and objects for which it was given or purchased." It is a lawful exercise of legislative authority upon the division of counties, towns, &c., to confer a part of the corporate property of the old corporation upon the new, and to direct the old body to pay it over to the new. *Harrison v. Bridgeton*, 16 Mass. 16; *Salem Turnpike v. Essex Co.*, 100 Mass. 282; *Whitney v. Stow*, 111 Mass. 368; *Stove v. Charlestown*, 114 Mass. 214; *Sedgwick Co. v. Banker*, 14 Kan. 498; *Portwood v. Montgomery*, 52 Miss. 523; *Bristol v. New Chester*, 3 N. H. 524; *Milwaukee Town v. Milwaukee City*, 12 Wis. 93; *Marshall Co. Court v. Calloway Co. Court*, 3 Bush, 93. But it seems that an apportionment of property can only be made at the time of the division. *Windham v. Portland*, 4 Mass. 390; *Hampshire v. Franklin*, 16 Mass. 76. See *Richland v. Lawrence*, 12 Ill. 8; *Bowdoinham v. Richmond*, 6 Me. 112. In the latter case, it was held that the ap-

riously to the municipalities or to individuals, the remedy is not with the courts. The courts have no power to interfere, and the people must be looked to, to right through the ballot-box all these wrongs.¹ This is the general rule; and the exceptions to it are not numerous, and will be indicated hereafter.

portionment of debts between an old town and one created from it was in the nature of a contract; and it was not in the power of the legislature afterwards to release the new township from payment of its share as thus determined. But the case of *Layton v. New Orleans*, 12 La. Ann. 515, is *contra*. See also *Borough of Dunmore's Appeal*, 52 Penn. St. 374, which in principle seems to accord with the Louisiana case. In *Burns v. Clarion County*, 62 Penn. St. 422, it was held the legislature had the power to open a settlement made by county auditors with the county treasurer, and to compel them to settle with him on principles of equity. See further, *Cambridge v. Lexington*, 17 Pick. 222; *Attorney-General v. Cambridge*, 16 Gray, 247; *Clark v. Cambridge, &c. Bridge Proprietors*, 104 Mass. 236. The legislature has power to lay out a road through several towns, and apportion the expense between them. *Waterville v. Kennebeck County*, 59 Me. 80; *Commonwealth v. Newburyport*, 103 Mass. 129. And it may change the law and redistribute the burden afterwards, if from a change of circumstances or other reasons it is deemed just and proper to do so. *Scituate v. Weymouth*, 108 Mass. 131, and cases cited. A statute abolishing school districts is not void on grounds like the following: that it takes the property of the districts without compensation; that the taxes imposed will not be proportional and reasonable, or that contracts will be effected. *Rawson v. Spencer*, 113 Mass. 40. See *Weymouth, &c. Fire District v. County Commissioners*, 108 Mass. 142.

¹ "The correction of these abuses is as readily attained at the ballot-box as it would be by subjecting it to judicial revision. A citizen or a number of citizens may be subtracted from a county free from debt, having no taxation for county purposes, and added to an adjacent one, whose debts are heavy, and whose taxing powers are exercised to the utmost extent allowed by law, and this, too, without consulting their wishes. It is done every day. Perhaps a majority of the people, thus annexed to an adjacent or thrown into a new county by the division of an old one, may have petitioned the legislature for this change; but this is no relief to the outvoted minority, or the individual who deems himself oppressed and vexed by the change. Must we, then, to prevent such occasional hardships, deny the power entirely?

"It must be borne in mind that these corporations, whether established over cities, counties, or townships (where such incorporated subdivisions exist), are never intrusted and can never be intrusted with any legislative power inconsistent or conflicting with the general laws of the land, or derogatory to those rights either of person or property which the constitution and the general laws guarantee. They are strictly subordinate to the general laws, and merely created to carry out the purposes of those laws with more certainty and efficiency. They may be and sometimes are intrusted with powers which properly appertain to private corporations, and in such matters their power as mere municipal corporations ceases." *City of St. Louis v. Allen*, 13 Mo. 414.

** Powers of Public Corporations.*

[* 194]

The powers of these corporations are either express or implied. The former are those which the legislative act under which they exist confers in express terms; the latter are such as are necessary in order to carry into effect those expressly granted, and which must, therefore, be presumed to have been within the intention of the legislative grant.¹ Certain powers are also incidental to corporations, and will be possessed unless expressly or by implication prohibited. Of these an English writer has said: "A municipal corporation has at common law few powers beyond those of electing, governing, and removing its members, and regulating its franchises and property. The power of its governing officers can only extend to the administration of the by-laws and other ordinances by which the body is regulated."² But without being expressly empowered so to do, they may sue and be sued; may have a common seal; may purchase and hold lands and other *property for corporate purposes, [* 195] and convey the same; may make by-laws whenever necessary to accomplish the design of the incorporation, and enforce the same by penalties; and may enter into contracts to effectuate the corporate purposes.³ Except as to these incidental powers, and which need not be, though they usually are, mentioned in the charter, the charter itself, or the general law under which they exist, is the measure of the authority to be exercised. And the general disposition of the courts in this country has been to confine municipalities within the limits that a strict construction of the grants of powers in their charters will assign to them; thus applying substantially the same rule that is applied

¹ 2 Kent, 278, note; *Halstead v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 3 N. Y. 433; *Hodges v. Buffalo*, 2 Denio, 112; *New London v. Brainerd*, 22 Conn. 552; *State v. Ferguson*, 33 N. H. 424; *McMillan v. Lee County*, 3 Iowa, 311; *La Fayette v. Cox*, 5 Ind. 38; *Clark v. Des Moines*, 19 Iowa, 212; *State v. Morristown*, 33 N. J. 63; *Beaty v. Knowler*, 4 Pet. 162; *Mills v. Gleason*, 11 Wis. 470. In this last case, it was held that these corporations had im-

plied power to borrow money for corporate purposes. And see also *Ketcham v. Buffalo*, 14 N. Y. 356.

² Willcock on Municipal Corporations, tit. 769.

³ Angell & Ames on Corp. §§ 111, 239; 2 Kyd on Corp. 102; *State v. Ferguson*, 33 N. H. 430. See Dillon, *Mun. Corp.*, for an examination, in the light of the authorities, of the several powers here mentioned.

to charters of private incorporation.¹ The reasonable presumption is that the State has granted in clear and unmistakable terms all it has designed to grant at all.

¹ Under a city charter which authorized the common council to appoint assessors for the purpose of awarding damages to those through whose property a street might be opened, and to assess such damages on the property benefited, it was decided that the council were not empowered to levy a tax to pay for the other expenses of opening the street. *Reed v. Toledo*, 18 Ohio, 161. So a power to enact by-laws and ordinances to abate and remove nuisances will not authorize the passing of an ordinance to *prevent* nuisances, or to impose penalties for the creation thereof. *Rochester v. Collins*, 12 Barb. 559. A power to impose penalties for *obstructions* to streets would not authorize the like penalties for *encroachments* upon streets, where, under the general laws of the State, the offences are recognized as different and distinct. *Grand Rapids v. Hughes*, 15 Mich. 54. Authority to levy a tax on real and personal estate would not warrant an income tax, especially when such a tax is unusual in the State. *Mayor of Savannah v. Hartridge*, 8 Geo. 23. It will appear, therefore, that powers near akin to those expressly conferred are not, for that reason, to be taken by implication. And see *Commonwealth v. Erie and N. E. Railroad Co.*, 27 Penn. St. 339. This rule has often been applied where authority has been asserted on behalf of a municipal corporation to loan its credit to corporations formed to construct works of internal improvement. See *La Fayette v. Cox*, 5 Ind. 38. A power to pass ordinances to prohibit the sale or giving away of intoxicating liquors in certain special cases is an implied exclusion of the power to prohibit the sale or giving away in other cases. *State v. Ferguson*, 33 N. H.

424. In *Dunham v. Rochester*, 5 Cow. 465, it is said: "For all the purposes of jurisdiction, corporations are like the inferior courts, and must show the power given them in every case. If this be wanting, their proceedings must be holden void whenever they come in question, even collaterally; for they are not judicial and subject to direct review on *certiorari*. 2 Kyd on Corp. 104-107." The power to create indebtedness does not by implication carry with it a power to tax for its payment. *Jeffries v. Lawrence*, 42 Iowa, 498. The approving vote of the citizens cannot give an authority the law has not conferred. *McPherson v. Foster*, 43 Iowa, 48. See *Hackettstown v. Swackhamer*, 37 N. J. 191. The power "to enact ordinances necessary for government" does not authorize the grant of the franchise of a toll-bridge. *Williams v. Davidson*, 43 Tex. 1. In *Nashville v. Ray*, 19 Wall. 468, four of the eight justices of the Supreme Court denied the power of municipal corporations to borrow money or issue securities unless expressly authorized. Says Bradley, J.: "Such a power does not belong to a municipal corporation as an incident of its creation. To be possessed it must be conferred by legislation, either express or implied. It does not belong, as a mere matter of course, to local government to raise loans. Such governments are not created for any such purpose. Their powers are prescribed by their charters, and those charters provide the means for exercising the powers; and the creation of specific means excludes others." Compare *Bank of Chillicothe v. Chillicothe*, 7 Ohio, 353; *Clark v. School District*, 3 R. I. 199; *State v. Common Council of Madison*, 7 Wis. 688; *Mills v. Gleason*, 11 Wis.

* It must follow that, if in any case a party assumes to [* 196] deal with a corporation on the supposition that it possesses powers which it does not, or to contract in any other manner than is permitted by the charter, he will not be allowed, notwithstanding he may have complied with the undertaking on his part, to maintain a suit against the corporation based upon its unauthorized action. Even where a party is induced to enter upon work for a corporation by the false representations of corporate officers, in regard to the existence of facts on which by law the power of the corporation to enter upon the work depends, these false representations cannot have the effect to give a power which in the particular case was wanting, or to validate a contract otherwise void, and therefore can afford no ground of action against the corporation; but every party contracting with it must take notice of any want of authority which the public records would show.¹ This is the general rule, and the cases of unau-

470; *Hamlin v. Meadville* (Sup. Ct. Nebraska), 2 Western Jurist, 596. See also *Nashville v. Ray*, 19 Wall. 468; *Milhau v. Sharp*, 17 Barb. 435, 28 Barb. 228, and 27 N. Y. 611; *Douglas v. Placerville*, 18 Cal. 643; *Mount Pleasant v. Breeze*, 11 Iowa, 399; *Hooper v. Emery*, 14 Me. 375; *Mayor, &c. of Macon v. Macon and Western R. R. Co.*, 7 Geo. 224; *Hopple v. Brown*, 13 Ohio, n. s. 311; *Lackland v. Northern Missouri Railroad Co.*, 31 Mo. 180; *Smith v. Morse*, 2 Cal. 524; *Bennett v. Borough of Birmingham*, 31 Penn. St. 15; *Tucker v. Virginia City*, 4 Nev. 20; *Leavenworth v. Norton*, 1 Kan. 432; *Kyle v. Malin*, 8 Ind. 34; *Johnson v. Philadelphia*, 60 Penn. St. 451; *Kniper v. Louisville*, 7 Bush, 599; *Johnston v. Louisville*, 11 Bush, 527; *Williams v. Davidson*, 43 Tex. 1; *Burrit v. New Haven*, 42 Conn. 174; *Logan v. Payne*, 43 Iowa, 524; *Field v. Des Moines*, 39 Iowa, 575; *Vance v. Little Rock*, 30 Ark. 435; *English v. Chicot County*, 26 Ark. 454; *Pullen v. Raleigh*, 68 N. C. 451; *Chisholm v. Montgomery*, 2 Woods, 584.

¹ The common council of Williams-

burg had power to open, regulate, grade, and pave streets, but only upon petition signed by one-third of the persons owning lands within the assessment limits. A party entered into a contract with the corporation for improving a street upon the false representations of the council that such a petition had been presented. Held, that the provision of the law being public, and all the proceedings leading to a determination by the council to make a particular improvement being matters of record, all persons were chargeable with notice of the law and such proceedings; and that, notwithstanding the false representations, no action would lie against the city for work done under the contract. *Swift v. Williamsburg*, 24 Barb. 427. "If the plaintiff can recover on the state of facts he has stated in his complaint, the restrictions and limitations which the legislature sought to impose upon the powers of the common council will go for nothing. And yet these provisions are matters of substance, and were designed to be of some service to the constituents of the common council. They were intended to

thorized action which may bind the corporation are exceptional, and will be referred to further on.

protect the owners of lands and the tax-payers of the city, as well against the frauds and impositions of the contractors who might be employed to make local improvements, as against the illegal acts of the common council themselves in employing the contractors. But if the plaintiff can recover in this action, of what value or effect are all these safeguards? If the common council desire to make a local improvement, which the persons to be benefited thereby, and to be assessed therefor, are unwilling to have made, the consent of the owners may be wholly dispensed with, according to the plaintiff's theory. The common council have only to represent that the proper petition has been presented and the proper proceedings have been taken, to warrant the improvement. They then enter into the contract. The improvement is made. Those other safeguards for an assessment of the expenses and for reviewing the proceedings may or may not be taken. But when the work is completed and is to be paid for, it is found that the common council have no authority to lay any assessment or collect a dollar from the property benefited by the improvement. The contractor then brings his action, and recovers from the city the damages he has sustained by the failure of the city to pay him the contract price. The ground of his action is the falsity of the representations made to him. But the truth or falsity of such representations might have been ascertained by the party with the use of the most ordinary care and diligence. The existence of the proper petition, and the taking of the necessary initiatory steps to warrant the improvement, were doubtless referred to and recited in the contract made with the plaintiff. And he thus became again directly charge-

able with notice of the contents of all these papers. It is obvious that the restrictions and limitations imposed by the law cannot be thus evaded. The consent of the parties interested in such improvements cannot be dispensed with; the responsibility, which the conditions precedent created by the statute impose, cannot be thrown off in this manner. For the effect of doing so is to shift entirely the burden of making these local improvements, to relieve those on whom the law sought to impose the expense, and to throw it on others who are not liable either in law or morals."

So where the charter of Detroit provided that no public work should be contracted for or commenced until an assessment had been levied to defray the expense, and that no such work should be paid or contracted to be paid for, except out of the proceeds of the tax thus levied, it was held, that the city corporation had no power to make itself responsible for the price of any public work, and that such work could only be paid for by funds actually in the hands of the city treasurer, provided for the specific purpose. *Goodrich v. Detroit*, 12 Mich. 279. But if the city receives the fund and misappropriates it, it will be liable. *Lansing v. Van Gorder*, 24 Mich. 456.

Parties dealing with the agents or officers of municipal corporations must, at their own peril, take notice of the limits of the powers both of the municipal corporation, and of those assuming to act on its behalf. *State v. Kirkley*, 29 Md. 85; *Gould v. Sterling*, 23 N. Y. 464; *Clark v. Des Moines*, 19 Iowa, 209; *Veeder v. Lima*, 19 Wis. 280; *East Oakland v. Skinner*, 94 U. S. Rep. 255; *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* § 381.

* *Corporations by Prescription and Implication.* [*197]

The origin of many of the corporate privileges asserted and enjoyed in England is veiled in obscurity, and it is more than probable that in some instances they had no better foundation than an uninterrupted user for a considerable period. In other cases the royal or baronial grant became lost in the lapse of time, and the evidence that it had ever existed might rest exclusively upon reputation, or upon the inference to be drawn from the exercise of corporate functions. In all these cases it seems to be the law that the corporate existence may be maintained on the ground of *prescription*; that is to say, the exercise of corporate rights for a time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary is sufficient evidence that such rights were once granted by competent authority, and are therefore now exercised by right and not by usurpation.¹ And this presumption concludes the crown, notwithstanding the maxim that the crown shall lose no rights by lapse of time. If the right asserted is one of which a grant might be predicated, a jury is bound to presume a grant from that prescription.² In this particular the claim to a corporate franchise stands on the same ground as any claim of private right which requires a grant for its support, and is to be sustained under the same circumstances of continuous assertion and enjoyment.³ And even the grant of a charter by the crown will not preclude the claim to corporate rights by prescription; for a new charter does not extinguish old privileges.⁴

A corporation may also be established upon presumptive evidence that a charter has been granted within the time of memory. Such evidence is addressed to a jury, and, though not conclusive upon them, yet if it reasonably satisfies their minds, it will justify

¹ Introduction to Willcock on Municipal Corporations; *The King v. Mayor, &c. of Stratford upon Avon*, 14 East, 360; *Robie v. Sedgwick*, 35 Barb. 326. See *Londonderry v. Andover*, 28 Vt. 416.

² *Mayor of Hull v. Horner*, Cowp. 108, per Lord Mansfield. Compare *People v. Maynard*, 15 Mich. 470; *State v. Bunker*, 59 Me. 366.

³ 2 Kent, 277; Angell & Ames on Corp. § 70; 1 Kyd on Corp. 14.

⁴ *Hadduck's Case*, T. Raym. 439; *The King v. Mayor, &c. of Stratford upon Avon*, 14 East, 360; *Bow v. Allenstown*, 34 N. H. 366. See *Jameson v. People*, 16 Ill. 259.

them in a verdict finding the corporate existence. "There is a great difference," says Lord *Mansfield*, "between length of time which operates as a bar to a claim, and that which is only used by way of evidence. A jury is concluded by length of time that operates as a bar; as where the Statute of Limitations is pleaded in bar to a debt; though the jury is satisfied that the debt is due and unpaid, it is still a bar. So in the case of prescription. If it be time out of mind, a jury is bound to conclude the right from that prescription, if there could be a legal commencement of the right. But any written evidence, showing that there was a time when the prescription did not exist, is an answer to a claim founded on prescription. But length of time used merely by way of evidence may be left to the consideration of the jury, to be credited or not, and to draw their inference one way or the other according to circumstances."¹ The same ruling has been had in several cases in the courts of this country, where corporate powers had been exercised, but no charter could be produced. In one of these cases, common reputation that a charter had once existed was allowed to be given to the jury; the court remarking upon the notorious fact that two great fires in the capital of the colony had destroyed many of the public records.² In other cases there was evidence of various acts which could only lawfully and properly be done by a corporation, covering a period of thirty, forty, or fifty years, and done with the knowledge of the State and without question.³ The inference of corporate powers, however, is not one of law; but is to be drawn as a fact by the jury.⁴

Wherever a corporation is found to exist by prescription, the same rule as to construction of powers, we apprehend, [* 198] would apply as in other cases. * The presumption as to the powers granted would be limited by the proof of the usage, and nothing could be taken by intendment which the usage did not warrant.

¹ *Mayor of Hull v. Horner*, Cowp. 108, 109; citing, among other cases, *Bedle v. Beard*, 12 Co. 5.

² *Dillingham v. Snow*, 5 Mass. 552. And see *Bow v. Allentown*, 34 N. H. 351; *Bassett v. Porter*, 4 Cush. 487.

³ *Stockbridge v. West Stockbridge*, 12 Mass. 400; *New Boston v. Dun-*

barton, 13 N. H. 409, and 15 N. H. 201; *Bow v. Allentown*, 34 N. H. 351; *Trott v. Warren*, 2 Fairf. 227.

⁴ *New Boston v. Dunbarton*, 15 N. H. 201; *Bow v. Allentown*, 34 N. H. 351; *Mayor of Hull v. Horner*, 14 East, 102.

Corporations are also said sometimes to exist by implication. When that power in the State which can create corporations grants to individuals such property, rights, or franchises, or imposes upon them such burdens, as can only be properly held, enjoyed, continued, or borne, according to the terms of the grant, by a corporate entity, the intention to create such corporate entity is to be presumed, and corporate capacity is held to be conferred so far as is necessary to effectuate the purpose of the grant or burden. On this subject it will be sufficient for our purpose to refer to authorities named in the note.¹ In these cases the rule of strict construction of corporate powers applies with unusual force.

Municipal By-Laws.

The power of municipal corporations to make by-laws is limited in various ways.

1. It is controlled by the Constitution of the United States and of the State. The restrictions imposed by those instruments, and which directly limit the legislative power of the State, rest equally upon all the instruments of government created by the State. If a State cannot pass an *ex post facto* law, or law impairing the obligation of contracts, neither can any agency do so which acts under the State with delegated authority.² By-laws, therefore, which in their operation would be *ex post facto*, or violate contracts, are not within the power of municipal corporations; and whatever

¹ Dyer, 400, cited by Lord Kenyon, in *Russell v. Men of Devon*, 2 T. R. 672, and in 2 Kent, 276; Viner's Abr. tit. "Corporation;" *Conservators of River Tone v. Ash*, 10 B. & C. 349; s. c. 10 B. & C. 383, citing case of *Sutton Hospital*, 10 Co. 28; per Kent, Chancellor, in *Denton v. Jackson*, 2 Johns. Ch. 325; *Coburn v. Ellenwood*, 4 N. H. 101; *Atkinson v. Bemis*, 11 N. H. 46; *North Hempstead v. Hempstead*, 2 Wend. 109; *Thomas v. Dakin*, 22 Wend. 9; per Shaw, Ch. J., in *Stebbins v. Jennings*, 10 Pick. 188; *Mahony v. Bank of the State*, 4 Ark. 620.

§ 332; *Stuyvesant v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 7 Cow. 588; *Brooklyn Central Railroad Co. v. Brooklyn City Railroad Co.*, 32 Barb. 358; *Illinois Conference Female College v. Cooper*, 25 Ill. 148. The last was a case where a by-law of an educational corporation was held void, as violating the obligation of a contract previously entered into by the corporation in a certificate of scholarship which it had issued. See also *Davenport, &c. Co. v. Davenport*, 13 Iowa, 229; *Saving Society v. Philadelphia*, 31 Penn. St. 175; *Haywood v. Savannah*, 12 Geo. 404.

² Angell & Ames on Corporations,

the people by the State constitution have prohibited the State government from doing, it cannot do indirectly through the local governments.

2. Municipal by-laws must also be in harmony with the general laws of the State, and with the provisions of the municipal charter. Whenever they come in conflict with either, the by-law must give way.¹ The charter, however, may expressly or by necessary implication exclude the general laws of the State on any particular subject, and allow the corporation to pass local laws at discretion, which may differ from the rule in force elsewhere.² But in these cases the control of the State is not ex-

cluded if the legislature afterward see fit to exercise it; [* 199] nor will conferring a power upon a * corporation to pass

by-laws and impose penalties for the regulation of any specified subject necessarily supersede the State law on the same subject, but the State law and the by-law may both stand together if not inconsistent.³ Indeed, an act may be a penal offence under the laws of the State, and further penalties, under proper legislative authority, be imposed for its commission by municipal by-laws, and the enforcement of the one would not preclude the enforcement of the other.⁴

¹ *Wood v. Brooklyn*, 14 Barb. 428; *Mayor, &c. of New York v. Nichols*, 4 Hill, 209; *Petersburg v. Metzker*, 21 Ill. 205; *Southport v. Ogden*, 23 Conn. 128; *Andrews v. Insurance Co.*, 37 Me. 256; *Canton v. Nist*, 9 Ohio, n. s. 439; *Carr v. St. Louis*, 9 Mo. 191; *Commonwealth v. Erie and Northeast Railroad Co.*, 27 Penn. St. 339; *Burlington v. Kellar*, 18 Iowa, 59; *Conwell v. O'Brien*, 11 Ind. 419; *March v. Commonwealth*, 12 B. Monr. 25. See *Baldwin v. Green*, 10 Mo. 410; *Cowen v. West Troy*, 43 Barb. 48; *State v. Georgia Medical Society*, 38 Geo. 629; *Pesterfield v. Vickers*, 3 Cold. 205; *Mays v. Cincinnati*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 268; *Wirth v. Wilmington*, 68 N. C. 24.

² *State v. Clarke*, 1 Dutch. 54; *State v. Dwyer*, 21 Minn. 512; *Covington v. East St. Louis*, 78 Ill. 548; *Coulterville v. Gillen*, 72 Ill. 599. Peculiar and exceptional regulations may even

be made applicable to particular portions of a city only, and yet not be invalid. *Goddard, Petitioner*, 16 Pick. 504; *Commonwealth v. Patch*, 97 Mass. 222, per *Hoar, J.*; *St. Louis v. Weber*, 44 Mo. 547.

³ *City of St. Louis v. Bentz*, 11 Mo. 61; *City of St. Louis v. Cafferata*, 24 Mo. 97; *Rogers v. Jones*, 1 Wend. 261; *Levy v. State*, 6 Ind. 281; *Mayor, &c. of Mobile v. Allaire*, 14 Ala. 400.

⁴ Such is the clear weight of authority, though the decisions are not uniform. In *Rogers v. Jones*, 1 Wend. 261, it is said: "But it is said that the by-law of a town or corporation is void, if the legislature have regulated the subject by law. If the legislature have passed a law regulating as to certain things in a city, I apprehend the corporation are not thereby restricted from making further regulations. Cases of this kind

* 3. Municipal by-laws must also be reasonable. When- [* 200]
ever they appear not to be so, the court must, as a mat-

have occurred and never been questioned on that ground; it is only to notice a case or two out of many. The legislature have imposed a penalty of one dollar for servile labor on Sunday; the corporation of New York have passed a by-law imposing the penalty of five dollars for the same offence. As to storing gunpowder in New York, the legislature and corporation have each imposed the same penalty. Suits to recover the penalty have been sustained under the corporation law. It is believed that the ground has never been taken that there was a conflict with the State law. One of these cases is reported in 12 Johns. 122. The question was open for discussion, but not noticed." In *Mayor, &c. of Mobile v. Allaire*, 14 Ala. 400, the validity of a municipal by-law imposing a fine of fifty dollars, for an assault and battery committed within the city, was brought in question. *Collier*, Ch. J., says, p. 403: "The object of the power conferred by the charter, and the purpose of the ordinance itself, was not to punish for an offence against the criminal justice of the country, but to provide a mere *police regulation*, for the enforcement of good order and quiet within the limits of the corporation. So far as an offence has been committed against the public peace and morals, the corporate authorities have no power to inflict punishment, and we are not informed that they have attempted to arrogate it. It is altogether immaterial whether the State tribunal has interfered and exercised its powers in bringing the defendant before it to answer for the assault and battery; for whether he has there been punished or acquitted is alike unimportant. The offence against the corporation and the State we have seen are distinguishable and

wholly disconnected, and the prosecution at the suit of each proceeds upon a different hypothesis; the one contemplates the observance of the peace and good order of the city; the other has a more enlarged object in view, the maintenance of the peace and dignity of the State." See also *Mayor, &c. of Mobile v. Rouse*, 8 Ala. 515; *Intendant, &c. of Greensboro' v. Mullins*, 13 Ala. 341; *Mayor, &c. of New York v. Hyatt*, 3 E. D. Smith, 156; *People v. Stevens*, 13 Wend. 341; *Blatchley v. Moser*, 13 Wend. 215; *Levy v. State*, 6 Ind. 281; *Ambrose v. State*, 6 Ind. 351; *Lawrenceburg v. Wuest*, 16 Ind. 337; *Amboy v. Sleeper*, 31 Ill. 499; *St. Louis v. Bentz*, 11 Mo. 61; *St. Louis v. Cafferata*, 24 Mo. 94; *Shafer v. Mumma*, 17 Md. 331; *Brownville v. Cook*, 4 Neb. 101; *State v. Ludwig*, 21 Minn. 202. On the other hand, it was held in *State v. Cowan*, 29 Mo. 330, that where a municipal corporation was authorized to take cognizance of and punish an act as an offence against its ordinances which was also an offence against the general laws of the State, and this power was exercised and the party punished, he could not afterwards be proceeded against under the State law. "The constitution," say the court, "forbids that a person shall be twice punished for the same offence. To hold that a party can be prosecuted for an act under the State laws, after he has been punished for the same act by the municipal corporation within whose limits the act was done, would be to overthrow the power of the General Assembly to create corporations to aid in the management of the affairs of the State. For a power in the State to punish, after a punishment had been inflicted by the corporate authorities, could only find a support

ter of law, declare them void.¹ To render them reasonable, they should tend in some degree to the accomplishment of the [* 201] objects for which the corporation * was created and its powers conferred. A by-law, that persons chosen annu-

in the assumption that all the proceedings on the part of the corporation were null and void. The circumstance that the municipal authorities have not exclusive jurisdiction over the acts which constitute offences within their limits does not affect the question. It is enough that their jurisdiction is not excluded. If it exists,—although it may be concurrent,—if it is exercised, it is valid and binding so long as it is a constitutional principle that no man may be punished twice for the same offence.” This case seems to be supported by *State v. Welch*, 36 Conn. 216, and the case of *Slaughter v. People*, cited below, goes still further. Those which hold that the party may be punished under both the State and the municipal law are within the principle of *Fox v. State*, 5 How. 410; *Moore v. People*, 14 How. 13. And see *Phillips v. People*, 55 Ill. 429. In *Jefferson City v. Courtmire*, 9 Mo. 692, it was held that authority to a municipal corporation to “regulate the police of the city” gave it no power to pass an ordinance for the punishment of indictable offences. And in *Slaughter v. People*, 2 Doug. (Mich.) 334, it was held not competent to punish, under city by-laws, an indictable offence.

Where an act is expressly or by implication permitted by the State law, it cannot be forbidden by the corporation. Thus, the statutes of New York established certain regulations for the putting up and marking of pressed hay, and provided that such hay might be sold without deduction for tare, and by the weight as marked, or any other standard weight that

should be agreed upon. It was held that the city of New York had no power to prohibit under a penalty the sale of such hay without inspection; this being obviously inconsistent with the statute which gave a right to sell if its regulations were complied with. *Mayor, &c. of New York v. Nichols*, 4 Hill, 209.

¹ 2 Kyd on Corporations, 107; *Davies v. Morgan*, 1 Crompt. & J. 587; *Chamberlain of London v. Compton*, 7 D. & R. 597; *Clark v. Le Cren*, 9 B. & C. 52; *Gosling v. Velez*, 12 Q. B. 347; *Dunham v. Rochester*, 5 Cow. 462; *Mayor, &c. of Memphis v. Winfield*, 8 Humph. 707; *Hayden v. Noyes*, 5 Conn. 391; *Waters v. Leech*, 8 Ark. 110; *White v. Mayor*, 2 Swan, 364; *Ex parte Burnett*, 30 Ala. 461; *Craig v. Burnett*, 32 Ala. 728; *Austin v. Murray*, 16 Pick. 121; *Godard, Petitioner*, 16 Pick. 504; *Commonwealth v. Worcester*, 8 Pick. 462; *Commissioners v. Gas Co.*, 12 Penn. St. 318; *State v. Jersey City*, 29 N. J. 170; *Gallatin v. Bradford*, 1 Bibb, 209; *Carew v. Western Union Telegraph Co.*, 15 Mich. 525; *State v. Freeman*, 38 N. H. 426; *Pedrick v. Bailey*, 12 Gray, 161; *St. Louis v. Weber*, 44 Mo. 550. But where the question of the reasonableness of a by-law depends upon evidence, and it relates to a subject within the jurisdiction of the corporation, the court will presume it to be reasonable until the contrary is shown. *Commonwealth v. Patch*, 97 Mass. 221. And see *St. Louis v. Weber*, 44 Mo. 550. To be reasonable, by-laws should be equal in their operation. *Tugman v. Chicago*, 78 Ill. 405; *Bailing v. West*, 29 Wis. 307.

ally as stewards of the Society of Scriveners should furnish a dinner on election day to the freemen of the society,—the freemen not being the electors nor required to attend, and the office of steward being for no other purpose but that of giving the dinner,—was held not connected with the business of the corporation, and not tending to promote its objects, and therefore unreasonable and void.¹ And where a statute permitted a municipal corporation to license the sale of intoxicating drinks and to charge a license fee therefor, a by-law requiring the payment of a license fee of one thousand dollars was held void as not advancing the purpose of the law, but as being in its nature prohibitory.² And if a corporation has power to prohibit the carrying on of dangerous occupations within its limits, a by-law which should permit one person to carry on such an occupation and prohibit another, who had an equal right, from pursuing the same business; or which should allow the business to be carried on in existing buildings, but prohibit the erection of others for it, would be unreasonable.³ And a right to license an employment does not imply a right to charge a license fee therefor with a view to revenue, unless such seems to be the manifest purpose of the power; but the authority of the corporation will be limited to such a charge for the license as will cover the necessary expenses of issuing it, and the additional labor of officers and other expenses thereby imposed. A license is issued under the police power; but the exaction of a license fee with a view to revenue would be an exercise of the power of taxation; and the charter must

¹ *Society of Scriveners v. Brook-
ing*, 3 Q. B. 95. See, on this general
subject, *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* §§ 251–
264.

² *Ex parte Burnett*, 30 Ala. 461; *Craig v. Burnett*, 32 Ala. 728. A
by-law declaring the keeping on hand
of intoxicating liquors a nuisance was
held unreasonable and void in *Sulli-
van v. Oneida*, 61 Ill. 242. That
which is not a nuisance in fact cannot
be made such by municipal ordi-
nance. *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v.*
Joliet, 79 Ill. 25; *Wreford v. People*,
14 Mich. 41.

³ *Mayor, &c. of Hudson v. Thorne*,
7 Paige, 261. A power to prevent

and regulate the carrying on of man-
ufactures dangerous in causing or
promoting fires does not authorize an
ordinance prohibiting the erection of
wooden buildings within the city, or
to limit the size of buildings which
individuals shall be permitted to erect
on their own premises. *Ibid.* An
ordinance for the destruction of
property as a nuisance without a
judicial hearing is void. *Darst v.*
People, 51 Ill. 286. An ordinance
for the arrest and imprisonment with-
out warrant of a person refusing to
assist in extinguishing a fire is void.
Judson v. Reardon, 16 Minn. 431.

plainly show an intent to confer that power, or the municipal corporation cannot assume it.¹

[* 202] * A by-law to be reasonable should be certain. If it affixes a penalty for its violation, it would seem that such penalty should be a fixed and certain sum, and not left to the discretion of the officer or court which is to impose it on conviction; though a by-law imposing a penalty *not exceeding* a certain sum has been held not to be void for uncertainty.²

So a by-law to be reasonable should be in harmony with the general principles of the common law. If it is in general restraint of trade, — like the by-law that no person shall exercise the art of painter in the city of London, not being free of the company of painters, — it will be void on this ground.³ To take

¹ *State v. Roberts*, 11 Gill & J. 506; *Mays v. Cincinnati*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 268; *Cincinnati v. Bryson*, 15 Ohio, 625; *Freeholders v. Barber*, 2 Halst. 64; *Kip v. Paterson*, 2 Dutch. 298; *Bennett v. Borough of Birmingham*, 81 Penn. St. 15; *Commonwealth v. Stodder*, 2 Cush. 562; *Chilvers v. People*, 11 Mich. 43; *Mayor, &c. of Mobile v. Yuille*, 3 Ala. 144; *Johnson v. Philadelphia*, 60 Penn. St. 451; *State v. Herod*, 29 Iowa, 123; *Mayor, &c. of New York v. Second Avenue R. R. Co.*, 32 N. Y. 261; *Home Ins. Co. v. Augusta*, 50 Geo. 530. Nevertheless, the courts will not inquire very closely into the expense of a license with a view to adjudge it a tax, where it does not appear to be unreasonable in amount in view of its purpose as a regulation. *Ash v. People*, 11 Mich. 347; *Johnson v. Philadelphia*, 60 Penn. St. 451; *Burlington v. Putnam Ins. Co.*, 31 Iowa, 102. And in some cases it has been held that license fees might be imposed under the police power with a view to operate as a restriction upon the business or thing licensed. *Carter v. Dow*, 16 Wis. 299; *Tenney v. Lenz*, 16 Wis. 567. See *State v. Cassidy*, 22 Minn. 312. But in such cases, where the right to impose such license fees can be fairly deduced from the

charter, it would perhaps be safer and less liable to lead to confusion and difficulty to refer the corporate authority to the taxing power, rather than exclusively to the power of regulation. See *Dunham v. Trustees of Rochester*, 5 Cow. 462, upon the extent of the police power. Fees which are imposed under the inspection laws of the State are akin to license fees, and if exacted not for revenue, but to meet the expenses of regulation, are to be referred to the police power. *Cincinnati Gas Light Co. v. State*, 18 Ohio, n. s. 243. On this subject in general, see *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* §§ 291–308.

² *Mayor, &c. of Huntsville v. Phelps*, 27 Ala. 55, overruling *Mayor, &c. of Mobile v. Yuille*, 3 Ala. 144. And see *Piper v. Chappell*, 14 M. & W. 624.

³ *Clark v. Le Cren*, 9 B. & C. 52; *Chamberlain of London v. Compton*, 7 D. & R. 597. Compare *Hayden v. Noyes*, 5 Conn. 891; *Willard v. Killingworth*, 8 Conn. 247. But a by-law is not void, as in restraint of trade, which requires loaves of bread baked for sale to be of specified weight and properly stamped, or which requires bakers to be licensed. *Mayor, &c. of Mobile v. Yuille*, 3 Ala. 137.

an illustration from a private corporation: It has been held that a by-law of a bank, that all payments made or received by the bank must be examined at the time, and mistakes corrected before the dealer leaves, was unreasonable and invalid, and that a recovery might be had against the bank for an over-payment discovered afterwards, notwithstanding the by-law.¹ So a by-law of a town, which, under pretence of regulating the fishery of clams and oysters within its limits, prohibits all persons except the inhabitants of the town from taking shell-fish in a navigable river, is void as in contravention of common right.² * And [* 203] for like reasons a by-law is void which abridges the rights and privileges conferred by the general laws of the State, unless express authority therefor can be pointed out in the corporate charter.³ And a by-law which assumes to be a police regulation, but deprives a party of the use of his property without regard to the public good, under the pretence of the preservation of health, when it is manifest that such is not the object and purpose of the regulation, will be set aside as a clear and direct infringement of the right of property without any compensating advantages.⁴

¹ *Mechanics' and Farmers' Bank v. Smith*, 19 Johns. 115; *Gallatin v. Bradford*, 1 Bibb, 209. Although these are cases of private corporations, they are cited here because the rules governing the authority to make by-laws are the same with both classes of corporations.

² *Hayden v. Noyes*, 5 Conn. 391. As it had been previously held that every person has a common-law right to fish in a navigable river or arm of the sea, until by some legal mode of appropriation this common right was extinguished, — *Peck v. Lockwood*, 5 Day, 22, — the by-law in effect deprived every citizen, except residents of the township, of rights which were *vested*, so far as from the nature of the case a right could be vested. See also *Marietta v. Fearing*, 4 Ohio, 427. That a right to *regulate* does not include a right to prohibit, see also *Ex parte Burnett*, 30 Ala. 461; *Austin v. Murray*, 16 Pick. 121. And see *Milhau v. Sharp*, 17 Barb. 435, 28 Barb. 228, and 27 N. Y. 611.

³ *Dunham v. Trustees of Rochester*, 5 Cow. 462; *Mayor, &c. of New York v. Nichols*, 4 Hill, 209. See *Strauss v. Pontiac*, 40 Ill. 301.

⁴ By a by-law of the town of Charlestown all persons were prohibited, without license from the selectmen, from burying any dead body brought into town on any part of their own premises or elsewhere within the town. By the court, *Wilde, J.*: "A by-law to be valid must be reasonable; it must be *legi, fidei, rationi consona*. Now if this regulation or prohibition had been limited to the populous part of the town, and were made in good faith for the purpose of preserving the health of the inhabitants, which may be in some degree exposed to danger by the allowance of interments in the midst of a dense population, it would have been a very reasonable regulation. But it cannot be pretended that this by-law was made for the preservation of the health of the inhabitants. Its restraints extend many

[* 204]

** Delegation of Municipal Powers.*

Another and very important limitation which rests upon municipal powers is that they shall be executed by the municipality

miles into the country, to the utmost limits of the town. Now such an unnecessary restraint upon the right of interring the dead we think essentially unreasonable. If Charlestown may lawfully make such a by-law as this, all the towns adjoining Boston may impose similar restraints, and consequently all those who die in Boston must of necessity be interred within the precincts of the city. That this would be prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants, especially in the hot seasons of the year, and when epidemic diseases prevail, seems to be a well-established opinion. Interments, therefore, in cities and large populous towns, ought to be discountenanced, and no obstacles should be permitted to the establishment of cemeteries at suitable places in the vicinity. The by-law in question is therefore an unreasonable restraint upon many of the citizens of Boston, who are desirous of burying their dead without the city, and for that reason void. And this by-law would seem to be void for another reason. A by-law for the total restraint of one's right is void; as if a man be barred of the use of his land. Com. Dig. By-Law, c. 4. The land where the bodies were interred was the land of the Catholic Bishop of Boston, purchased by him in 1830, and then consecrated as a Catholic burying-ground, and has ever since been used as such, for the interment of Catholics dying in Charlestown and Boston. It is true the by-law does not operate to the total restraint or deprivation of the bishop's right, but it is a total restraint of the right of the burying the dead in Boston, for which a part

of the burying-ground was appropriated. The illegality of the by-law is the same, whether it may deprive one of the use of a part or the whole of his property; no one can be so deprived, unless the public good requires it. And the law will not allow the right of private property to be invaded under the guise of a police regulation for the preservation of health, when it is manifest that such is not the object and purpose of the regulation. Now we think this is manifest from the case stated in regard to the by-law in question. It is a clear and direct infringement of the right of property, without any compensating advantages, and not a police regulation made in good faith for the preservation of health. It interdicts, or in its operation necessarily intercepts, the sacred use to which the Catholic burying-ground was appropriated and consecrated, according to the forms of the Catholic religion; and such an interference, we are constrained to say, is wholly unauthorized and most unreasonable." *Austin v. Murray*, 16 Pick. 125. So in *Wreford v. People*, 14 Mich. 41, the common council of Detroit, under a power granted by statute to compel the owners and occupants of slaughter-houses to cleanse and abate them whenever necessary for the health of the inhabitants, assumed to pass an ordinance altogether prohibiting the slaughtering of animals within certain limits in the city; and it was held void. See further *State v. Jersey City*, 5 Dutch. 170. Upon the whole subject of municipal by-laws, see Angell & Ames on Corp. c. 10; Grant on Corp. 76 *et seq.* See also Redfield on Railways (8d ed.)

itself, or by such agencies or officers as the statute has pointed out. So far as its functions are legislative, they rest in the discretion and judgment of the municipal body intrusted with them, and that body cannot refer the exercise of the power to the discretion and judgment of its subordinates or of any other authority. So strictly is this rule applied, that when a city charter authorized the common council of the city to make by-laws and ordinances ordering and directing any of the streets to be pitched, levelled, paved, flagged, &c., or for the altering or repairing the * same, "within such time and in such manner as [* 205] they may prescribe under the superintendence and direction of the city superintendent," and the common council passed an ordinance directing a certain street to be pitched, levelled, and flagged, "in such manner as the city superintendent, under the direction of the committee on roads of the common council, shall direct and require," the ordinance was held void, because it left to the city superintendent and the committee of the common council the decision which, under the law, must be made by the council itself. The trust was an important and delicate one, as the expenses of the improvement were, by the statute, to be paid by the owners of the property in front of which it was made. It was in effect a power of taxation; and taxation is the exercise of sovereign authority; and nothing short of the most positive and explicit language could justify the court in holding that the legislature intended to confer such a power, or permit it to be conferred, on a city officer or committee. The statute in question not only contained no such language, but, on the con-

Vol. I. p. 88; Dillon, Mun. Corp. c. 12. The subject of the reasonableness of by-laws was considered at some length in *People v. Medical Society of Erie*, 24 Barb. 570, and *Same v. Same*, 32 N. Y. 187. In the first case, it was held that a regulation subjecting a member of the County Medical Society to expulsion, for charging less than the established fees, was unreasonable and void. In the second, it was decided that where a party had the prescribed qualifications for admission to the society, he could not be refused admission, on the ground of his having

previous to that time failed to observe the code of medical ethics prescribed by the society for its members. Municipal by-laws may impose penalties on parties guilty of a violation thereof, but they cannot impose forfeiture of property or rights, without express legislative authority. *State v. Ferguson*, 33 N. H. 430; *Phillips v. Allen*, 41 Penn. St. 481. See also *Kirk v. Nowell*, 1 T. R. 124; *White v. Tallman*, 2 Dutch. 67; *Hart v. Albany*, 9 Wend. 588; *Peoria v. Calhoun*, 29 Ill. 317; *St. Paul v. Coulter*, 12 Minn. 41.

trary, clearly expressed the intention of confining the exercise of this power to the common council, the members of which were elected by and responsible to those whose property they were thus allowed to tax.¹

This restriction, it will be perceived, is the same which rests upon the legislative power of the State, and it springs from the same reasons. The people in the one case in creating the legislative department, and the legislature in the other in conferring the corporate powers, have selected the depository of the power which they have designed should be exercised, and in confiding it to such depository have impliedly prohibited its being exercised by any other agency. A trust created for any public purpose cannot be assignable at the will of the trustee.²

¹ *Thompson v. Schermerhorn*, 6 N. Y. 92. See also *Smith v. Morse*, 2 Cal. 524; *Oakland v. Carpentier*, 13 Cal. 540; *Whyte v. Nashville*, 2 Swan, 864; *East St. Louis v. Wehrung*, 50 Ill. 28; *Rogers v. Collier*, 43 Mo. 359; *State v. Jersey City*, 1 Dutch. 309; *Hydes v. Joyes*, 4 Bush, 464; *Lyon v. Jerome*, 26 Wend. 485; *State v. Patterson*, 34 N. J. 168; *State v. Fiske*, 9 R. I. 94; *Kinmundry v. Mahan*, 72 Ill. 462; *Davis v. Reed*, 65 N. Y. 566; *Supervisors of Jackson v. Brush*, 77 Ill. 59; *Thomson v. Booneville*, 61 Mo. 282; *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* § 60.

² The charter of Washington gave the corporation authority "to authorize the drawing of lotteries, for effecting any important improvement in the city, which the ordinary funds or revenue thereof will not accomplish; provided that the amount raised in each year shall not exceed ten thousand dollars. And provided also that the object for which the money is intended to be raised shall be first submitted to the President of the United States, and shall be approved by him." *Marshall*, Ch. J., speaking of this authority, says: "There is great weight in the argument that it is a trust, and an important trust, confided to the corporation itself, for the purpose of effecting important

improvements in the city, and ought, therefore, to be executed under the immediate authority and inspection of the corporation. It is reasonable to suppose that Congress, when granting a power to authorize gaming, would feel some solicitude respecting the fairness with which the power should be used, and would take as many precautions against its abuse as was compatible with its beneficial exercise. Accordingly, we find a limitation upon the amount to be raised, and on the object for which the lottery may be authorized. It is to be for any important improvement in the city, which the ordinary funds or revenue thereof will not accomplish; and it is subjected to the judgment of the President of the United States. The power thus cautiously granted is deposited with the corporation itself, without an indication that it is assignable. It is to be exercised like other corporate powers, by the agents of the corporation under its control. While it remains where Congress has placed it, the character of the corporation affords some security against its abuse, — some security that no other mischief will result from it than is inseparable from the thing itself. But if the management, control, and responsibility may be transferred to

* Equally incumbent upon the State legislature and [* 206] these municipal bodies is the restriction that they shall adopt no irrevocable legislation. No legislative body can so part with its powers by any proceeding as not to be able to continue the exercise of them. It can and should exercise them again and again, as often as the public interests require.¹ Such a body has no power, even by contract, to control and embarrass its legislative powers and duties. On this ground it has been held, that a grant of land by a municipal corporation, for the purposes of a cemetery, with a covenant for quiet enjoyment by the grantee, could not preclude the corporation, in the exercise of its police powers, from prohibiting any further use of the land for cemetery purposes, when the advance of population threatened to make such use a public nuisance.² So when "a lot is granted as a place of deposit for gunpowder, or other purpose innocent in itself at the time; it is devoted to that purpose till, in the progress of population, it becomes dangerous to the property, the safety, or the lives of hundreds; it cannot be that the mere form of the grant, because the parties choose to make it particular instead of general and absolute, should prevent the use to which it is limited being regarded and treated as a nuisance, when it becomes so in fact. In this way the legislative powers essential to the comfort and preservation of populous communities might be frittered away into * per- [* 207]fect insignificance. To allow rights thus to be parcelled out and secured beyond control would fix a principle by which our cities and villages might be broken up. Nuisances might and undoubtedly would be multiplied to an intolerable extent." ³

And on the same ground it is held, that a municipal corporation, having power to establish, make, grade, and improve streets,

any adventurer who will purchase, all the security for fairness which is furnished by character and responsibility is lost." *Clark v. Washington*, 12 Wheat. 54.

¹ *East Hartford v. Hartford Bridge Co.*, 10 How. 535; *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* § 61.

² *Brick Presbyterian Church v. City of New York*, 5 Cow. 540; *New York v. Second Avenue R. R. Co.*,

32 N. Y. 261. Compare *Kincaid's Appeal*, 66 Penn. St. 411; s. c. 5 Am. Rep. 377.

³ *Coats v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 7 Cow. 605. See also *Davis v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 14 N. Y. 506; *Attorney-General v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 3 Duer, 119; *State v. Graves*, 19 Md. 51; *Gozzle v. Georgetown*, 6 Wheat. 597; *Louisville City R. R. Co. v. Louisville*, 8 Bush, 415.

does not, by once establishing the grade, preclude itself from changing it as the public needs or interest may seem to require, notwithstanding the incidental injury which must result to those individuals who have erected buildings with reference to the first grade.¹ So a corporation having power under the charter to establish and regulate streets cannot under this authority, without explicit legislative consent, permit individuals to lay down a railway in one of its streets, and confer privileges exclusive in their character and designed to be perpetual in duration. In a case where this was attempted, it has been said by the court: "The corporation has the exclusive right to control and regulate the use of the streets of the city. In this respect, it is endowed with legislative sovereignty. The exercise of that sovereignty has no limit, so long as it is within the objects and trusts for which the power is conferred. An ordinance regulating a street is a legislative act, entirely beyond the control of the judicial power of the State. But the resolution in question is not such an act. Though it relates to a street, and very materially affects the mode in which that street is to be used, yet

¹ *Calendar v. Marsh*, 1 Pick. 417; *Griggs v. Foote*, 4 Allen, 195; *Radcliffe's Executors v. Brooklyn*, 4 N. Y. 195; *Graves v. Otis*, 2 Hill, 466; *O'Connor v. Pittsburg*, 18 Penn. St. 187; *Reading v. Keppleman*, 61 Penn. St. 233; *Shinner v. Hartford Bridge Co.*, 29 Conn. 523; *Snyder v. Rockport*, 6 Ind. 237; *La Fayette v. Bush*, 19 Ind. 326; *La Fayette v. Fowler*, 34 Ind. 140; *Keal v. Keokuk*, 4 Greene (Iowa), 47; *Cole v. Muscatine*, 14 Iowa, 296; *Russell v. Burlington*, 30 Iowa, 262; *Roberts v. Chicago*, 26 Ill. 249; *Murphy v. Chicago*, 29 Ill. 279; *Quincy v. Jones*, 76 Ill. 231; *Rounds v. Mumford*, 2 R. I. 154; *Rome v. Omberg*, 28 Geo. 46; *Roll v. Augusta*, 34 Geo. 326; *Reynolds v. Shreveport*, 13 La. Ann. 426; *White v. Yazoo City*, 27 Miss. 357; *Humes v. Mayor, &c.*, 1 Humph. 403; *St. Louis v. Gumo*, 12 Mo. 414; *Taylor v. St. Louis*, 14 Mo. 20; *Keasy v. Louisville*, 4 Dana, 154; *Smith v. Washington*, 20 How. 135; *Blount v. Janesville*, 31 Wis. 648; *Nevins v. Peoria*, 41 Ill. 502; *Pontiac v. Carter*, 32 Mich. 164; *Wegmann v. Jefferson*, 61 Mo. 55. Compare *Louisville v. Rolling Mill Co.*, 3 Bush, 416. The law would seem to be otherwise declared in Ohio. See *Rhodes v. Cincinnati*, 10 Ohio, 159; *McCombs v. Akron*, 15 Ohio, 474; s. c. 18 Ohio, 229; *Crawford v. Delaware*, 7 Ohio, n. s. 459. Compare *Alexander v. Milwaukee*, 16 Wis. 256. Courts will not undertake to control municipal discretion in the matter of improving streets. *Dunham v. Hyde Park*, 75 Ill. 371; *Brush v. Carbondale*, 78 Ill. 74. The owner of a lot on a city street acquires no prescriptive right to collateral support for his buildings which can render the city liable for injuries caused by grading the street. *Mitchell v. Rome*, 49 Geo. 19; s. c. 15 Am. Rep. 669; *Quincy v. Jones*, 76 Ill. 231; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 243. But the failure to use due care and prudence in grading may render the city liable. *Bloomington v. Brokaw*, 77 Ill. 194.

in its essential features it is a contract. Privileges exclusive in their nature and designed to be perpetual in their duration are conferred. Instead of regulating the use of the street, the use itself to the extent specified in the resolution is granted to the associates. For what has been deemed an adequate consideration, the corporation has assumed to surrender a portion of their municipal authority, and has in legal effect agreed with the defendants that, so far as they may have occasion to use the street for the purpose of constructing and operating their railroad, the right to regulate * and control the use of that [* 208] street shall not be exercised. . . . It cannot be that powers vested in the corporation as an important public trust can thus be frittered away, or parcelled out to individuals or joint-stock associations, and secured to them beyond control.”¹

So it has been held, that the city of Philadelphia exercised a portion of the public right of eminent domain in respect to the streets within its limits, subject only to the higher control of the State and the use of the people; and therefore a written license granted by the city, though upon a valuable consideration, authorizing the holder to connect his property with the city railway by a turnout and track, was not such a contract as would prevent the city from abandoning or removing the railway whenever, in the opinion of the city authorities, such action would tend to the benefit of its police.²

Thus hedged in by the limitations which control the legislative power of the State, these corporations are also entitled to the same protection which surrounds the exercise of State legislative power. One of these is, that no right of action shall arise in favor of an individual for incidental injury suffered by him in consequence of their adopting or failing to adopt legislative

¹ *Milhau v. Sharp*, 17 Barb. 435; s. c. 28 Barb. 228, and 27 N. Y. 611. See also *Davis v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 14 N. Y. 506; *State v. Mayor, &c.*, 3 Duer, 119; *State v. Graves*, 19 Md. 351. Compare *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. People*, 73 Ill. 541. The consent of the legislature in any such case would relieve it of all difficulty, except so far as questions might arise concerning the right of individuals to compensation, as to which see *post*,

c. 15. In *Milhau v. Sharp, supra*, it was also held that a corporation, with authority “from time to time to regulate the rates of fare to be charged for the carriage of persons,” could not by resolution divest itself thereof as to the carriages employed on a street-railway.

² *Bryson v. Philadelphia*, 47 Penn. St. 329. Compare *Louisville City R. R. Co. v. Louisville*, 8 Bush, 415.

action.¹ Another is, that the same presumption that they have proceeded upon sufficient information and with correct motives shall support their legislative action which supports the statutes of the State, and precludes judicial inquiry on these points.²

These rules, however, must be confined to those cases [* 209] where the corporation *is exercising a discretionary power, and where the reasons which are to determine whether it shall act or not, and if it does, what the action shall be, are addressed to the municipal body exclusively. If the corporation is in the position of trustee of property for other persons, it is subject to the same supervision and control with other trustees, and where a specific act is required by law to be done, exact performance may be compelled as in other cases.

Among the implied powers of such an organization appears to be the power to defend and indemnify its officers where they have incurred liability in the *bona fide* discharge of their duty. It has been decided in a case where irregularities had occurred in the assessment of a tax, in consequence of which the tax was void, and the assessors had refunded to the persons taxed the moneys which had been collected and paid into the town, county, and State treasuries, that the town had authority to vote to raise a sum

¹ Radcliffe's Ex'rs v. Mayor, &c. of Brooklyn, 4 N. Y. 195; Duke v. Mayor, &c. of Rome, 20 Geo. 635; Larkin v. Saginaw County, 11 Mich. 88; Detroit v. Beckman, 34 Mich. 125; Little Rock v. Willis, 27 Ark. 572; Tate v. M. K. & T. R. R. Co., 64 Mo. 149; St. Louis v. Gurno, 12 Mo. 414; Griffin v. Mayor, &c. of New York, 9 N. Y. 456; Mills v. Brooklyn, 32 N. Y. 489; Hines v. Lockport, 50 N. Y. 236; Davenport v. Stevenson, 34 Iowa, 225; Bennett v. New Orleans, 14 La. Ann. 120; Weightman v. Washington, 1 Black, 89; Western College v. Cleveland, 12 Ohio, n. s. 375; Barton v. Syracuse, 37 Barb. 292; Wheeler v. Cincinnati, 19 Ohio, n. s. 19; s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 368; Hewson v. New Haven, 37 Conn. 475; Murtagh v. St. Louis, 44 Mo. 480; Commissioners v. Duckett, 20 Md. 468; Carr v. Northern Liberties, 35 Penn. St. 324; Grant v. Erie, 69 Penn. St. 420; s. c. 8 Am.

Rep. 272; Sparhawk v. Salem, 1 Allen, 80; Randall v. Eastern R. Corp., 106 Mass. 276; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 326; Hughes v. Baltimore, Taney, 243. But this doctrine does not deprive an individual of remedy when by reason of the negligent construction of a public work his property is injured, or when the necessary result of its construction is to flood or otherwise injure his property in a manner that would render a private individual liable. See Van Pelt v. Davenport, 20 Am. Rep. 622, and note thereto, p. 626; Merrifield v. Worcester, 110 Mass. 216; s. c. 14 Am. Rep. 502; Wegmann v. Jefferson, 61 Mo. 55; Union v. Durkes, 38 N. J. 21.

² Milhau v. Sharp, 15 Barb. 193; New York and Harlaem Railroad Co. v. Mayor, &c. of New York, 1 Hilton, 562; Buell v. Ball, 20 Iowa, 282; Freeport v. Marks, 59 Penn. St. 253. Compare State v. Cincinnati Gas Co., 18 Ohio, n. s. 262.

of money in order to refund to the assessors what had been so paid by them, and that such vote was a legal promise to pay, on which the assessors might maintain action against the town. "The general purpose of this vote," it was said, "was just and wise. The inhabitants, finding that three of their townsmen, who had been elected by themselves to an office, which they could not, without incurring a penalty, refuse to accept, had innocently and inadvertently committed an error which, in strictness of law, annulled their proceedings, and exposed them to a loss perhaps to the whole extent of their property, if all the inhabitants individually should avail themselves of their strict legal rights, — finding also that the treasury of the town had been supplied by the very money which these unfortunate individuals were obliged to refund from their own estates, and that, so far as the town tax went, the very persons who had rigorously exacted it from the assessors, or who were about to do it, had themselves shared in due proportion the benefits and use of the money which had been paid into the treasury, in the shape of schools, highways, and various other objects which the necessities of a municipal institution call for, — concluded to reassess the tax, and to provide for its assessment in a manner which would have produced perfect justice to every individual of the corporation, and would have protected the assessors from the effects of their inadvertence in the assessment which was found to be invalid. The inhabitants of the town had a perfect right to make this reassessment, if they had a right to raise the money originally. The necessary supplies to the treasury of a town cannot be intercepted, because of an inequality in the mode of apportioning the sum upon the individuals. Debts must be incurred, duties must be performed, by every town; * the [* 210] safety of each individual depends upon the execution of the corporate duties and trusts. There is and must be an inherent power in every town to bring the money necessary for the purposes of its creation into the treasury; and if its course is obstructed by the ignorance or mistakes of its agents, they may proceed to enforce the end and object by correcting the means; and whether this be done by resorting to their original power of voting to raise money a second time for the same purposes, or by directing to reassess the sum before raised by vote, is immaterial; perhaps the latter mode is best, at least it is equally good." ¹

¹ Per *Parker*, Ch. J., in *Nelson v. v. Windham*, 13 Me. 74; *Fuller v. Milford*, 7 Pick. 23. See also *Baker Groton*, 11 Gray, 340; *Board of*

It has also been held competent for a town to appropriate money to indemnify the school committee for expenses incurred in defending an action for an alleged libel contained in a report made by them in good faith, and in which action judgment had been rendered in their favor.¹ And although it should appear that the officer had exceeded his legal right and authority, yet if he has acted in good faith in an attempt to perform his duty, the town has

the right to adopt his act and to bind itself to indemnify [* 211] him.² * And perhaps the legislature may even have power

Commissioners v. Lucas, 93 U. S. Rep. 108; *State v. Hammonton*, 38 N. J. 430; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 404. The duty, however, must have been one authorized by law, and the matter one in which the corporation had an interest. *Gregory v. Bridgeport*, 41 Conn. 76; s. c. 19 Am. Rep. 485. In *Bristol v. Johnson*, 34 Mich. 123, it appeared that a township treasurer had been robbed of town moneys, but had accounted to the township therefor. An act of the legislature was then obtained for refunding this sum to him by tax. Held, not justified by the constitution of the State, which forbids the allowance of demands against the public by the legislature. See *People v. Supervisor of Onondaga*, 16 Mich. 254.

A municipal corporation, it is said, may offer rewards for the detection of offenders within its limits; but its promise to reward an officer for that which, without such reward, it was his duty to do, is void. *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* § 91, and cases cited. And see note, p. 212, *supra*.

¹ *Fuller v. Inhabitants of Groton*, 11 Gray, 340. See also *Hadsell v. Inhabitants of Hancock*, 3 Gray, 526; *Pike v. Middleton*, 12 N. H. 278.

² A surveyor of highways cut a drain for the purpose of raising a legal question as to the bounds of the highway, and the town appointed a committee to defend an action brought against the surveyor therefor, and voted to defray the expenses incurred

by the committee. By the court:

“It is the duty of a town to repair all highways within its bounds, at the expense of the inhabitants, so that the same may be safe and convenient for travellers; and we think it has the power, as incident to this duty, to indemnify the surveyor, or other agent, against any charge or liability he may incur in the *bona fide* discharge of this duty, although it may turn out on investigation that he mistook his legal rights and authority. The act by which the surveyor incurred a liability was the digging a ditch, as a drain for the security of the highway; and if it was done for the purpose of raising a legal question as to the bounds of the highway, as the defendants offered to prove at the trial, the town had, nevertheless, a right to adopt the act, for they were interested in the subject, being bound to keep the highway in repair. They had, therefore, a right to determine whether they would defend the surveyor or not; and having determined the question, and appointed the plaintiffs a committee to carry on the defence, they cannot now be allowed to deny their liability, after the committee have paid the charges incurred under the authority of the town. The town had a right to act on the subject-matter which was within their jurisdiction; and their votes are binding and create a legal obligation, although they were under no previous obligation to indemnify the surveyor.

to compel the town, in such a case, to reimburse its officers the expenses incurred by them in the honest but mistaken discharge of what they believed to be their duty, notwithstanding the town, by vote, has refused to do so.¹

Construction of Municipal Powers.

The powers conferred upon municipalities must be construed with reference to the object of their creation, namely, as agencies of the State in local government.² The State can create them for

That towns have an authority to defend and indemnify their agents who may incur a liability by an inadvertent error, or in the performance of their duties imposed on them by law, is fully maintained by the case of *Nelson v. Milford*, 7 Pick. 18." *Bancroft v. Lynnfield*, 18 Pick. 568. And see *Briggs v. Whipple*, 6 Vt. 95; *Sherman v. Carr*, 8 R. I. 431.

¹ *Guilford v. Supervisors of Chenango*, 13 N. Y. 143. See this case commented upon by *Lyon, J.*, in *State v. Tappen*, 29 Wis. 674, 680. On the page last mentioned it is said, "We have seen no case except in the courts of New York, which holds that such moral obligation gives the legislature power to compel payment." And see *Bristol v. Johnson*, 34 Mich. 123. Where officers make themselves liable to penalties for refusal to perform duty, the corporation has no authority to indemnify them. *Halstead v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 8 N. Y. 430; *Merrill v. Plainfield*, 45 N. H. 126. See *Frost v. Belmont*, 6 Allen, 152; *People v. Lawrence*, 6 Hill, 244; *Vincent v. Nantucket*, 12 Cush. 105.

² A somewhat peculiar question was involved in the case of *Jones v. Richmond*, 18 Grat. 517. In anticipation of the evacuation of the city of Richmond by the Confederate authorities, and under the apprehension that scenes of disorder might follow which

would be aggravated by the opportunity to obtain intoxicating liquors, the common council ordered the seizure and destruction of all such liquors within the city, and pledged the faith of the city to the payment of the value. The Court of Appeals of Virginia afterwards decided that the city might be held liable on the pledge in an action of assumpsit. *Rives, J.*, says: "By its charter the council is specially empowered to 'pass all by-laws, rules, and regulations which they shall deem necessary for the peace, comfort, convenience, good order, good morals, health, or safety of said city, or of the people or property therein.' It is hard to conceive of larger terms for the grant of sovereign legislative powers to the specified end than those thus employed in the charter; and they must be taken by necessary and unavoidable intendment to comprise the powers of eminent domain within these limits of prescribed jurisdiction. There were two modes open to the council: first, to direct the destruction of these stores, leaving the question of the city's liability therefor to be afterwards litigated and determined; or, secondly, assuming their liability, to contract for the values destroyed under their orders. Had they pursued the first mode, the corporation would have been liable in an action of trespass for the damages; but they thought

no other purpose, and it can confer powers of government to no other end, without at once coming in conflict with the constitutional maxim, that legislative power cannot be delegated, or with other maxims designed to confine all the agencies of government to the exercise of their proper functions. And wherever the municipality shall attempt to exercise powers not within the proper province of local self-government, whether the right to do so be claimed under express legislative grant, or by implication from the charter, the act must be considered as altogether *ultra vires*, and therefore void.

A reference to a few of the adjudged cases will perhaps best illustrate this principle. The common council of the city of Buffalo undertook to provide an entertainment and ball for its citizens and certain expected guests on the 4th of July, and for that purpose entered into contract with a hotel keeper to provide the entertainment at his house, at the expense of the city. The entertainment was furnished and in part paid for, and suit was brought to recover the balance due. The city had authority, under its charter, to raise and expend moneys for various specified purposes, and also "to defray the contingent and other expenses of the city." But providing an entertainment for its citizens is no part of municipal self-government, and it has never been [* 212] considered, * where the common law has prevailed, that the power to do so pertained to the government in any of its departments. The contract was therefore held void, as not within the province of the city government.¹

proper to adopt the latter mode, make it a matter of contract, and approach their citizens, not as trespassers, but with the amicable proffer of a formal receipt and the plighted faith of the city for the payment. In this they seem to me to be well justified." Judge Dillon doubts the soundness of this decision. Dillon, Mun. Corp. § 871, note. The case seems to us analogous in principle to that of the destruction of buildings to stop the progress of a fire. In each case private property is destroyed to anticipate and prevent an impending public calamity. See *post*, pp. *526, *594.

¹ Hodges v. Buffalo, 2 Denio, 110.

See also the case of New London v. Brainard, 22 Conn. 552, which follows and approves this case. The cases differ in this only: that in the first suit was brought to enforce the illegal contract, while in the second the city was enjoined from paying over moneys which it had appropriated for the purposes of the celebration. The cases of Tash v. Adams, 10 Cush. 252, and Hood v. Lynn, 1 Allen, 103, are to the same effect. A town, it has been held, cannot lawfully be assessed to pay a reward offered by a vote of the town for the apprehension and conviction of a person supposed to have com-

The supervisors of the city of New York refused to perform a duty imposed upon them by law, and were prosecuted severally for the penalty which the law imposed for such refusal, and judgment recovered. The board of supervisors then assumed, on behalf of the city and county, the payment of these judgments, together with the costs of defending the suits, and caused drafts to be drawn upon the treasurer of the city for these amounts. It was held, that these drafts upon the public treasury to indemnify officers for disregard of duty were altogether unwarranted and void, and that it made no difference that the officers had acted conscientiously in refusing to perform their duty, and in the honest belief that the law imposing the duty was unconstitutional. The city had no interest in the suits against the supervisors, and appropriating the public funds to satisfy the judgments and costs was not within either the express or implied powers conferred upon the board.¹ It was in fact appropriating the public money for private purposes, and a tax levied therefor must consequently be invalid, on general principles controlling the right of taxation, which will be considered in another place. In a recent case in Iowa it is said: "No instance occurs to us in which it would be competent for [a municipal corporation] to loan its credit or make its accommodation paper for the benefit of citizens to enable them to execute private enterprises;"² and where it cannot loan its credit to private undertakings, it

mitted murder therein. *Gale v. South Berwick*, 51 Me. 174. Nor, under its general authority to raise money for "necessary town charges," is a town authorized to raise and expend moneys to send lobbyists to the legislature. *Frankfort v. Winterport*, 54 Me. 250. Or, under like authority, to furnish a uniform for a volunteer military company. *Claffin v. Hopkinton*, 4 Gray, 502. Where a municipal corporation enters into a contract *ultra vires*, no implied contract arises to compensate the contractor for any thing he may have done under it, notwithstanding the corporation may have reaped a benefit therefrom. *McSpedon v. New York*, 7 Bosw. 601; *Zottman v. San Francisco*, 20 Cal. 96.

¹ *Halstead v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 3 N. Y. 430. See a similar case in *People v. Lawrence*, 6 Hill, 244. See also *Carroll v. St. Louis*, 12 Mo. 444; *Vincent v. Nantucket*, 12 Cush. 103; *Parsons v. Goshen*, 11 Pick. 396; *Merrill v. Plainfield*, 45 N. H. 126.

² *Clark v. Des Moines*, 19 Iowa, 224; *Carter v. Dubuque*, 35 Iowa, 416. See *Tyson v. School Directors*, 51 Penn. St. 9; *Freeland v. Hastings*, 10 Allen, 570; *Thompson v. Pittston*, 59 Me. 545; *Kelly v. Marshall*, 69 Penn. St. 319; *Allen v. Jay*, 60 Me. 124; s. c. Am. Law Reg., Aug. 1873, with note by Judge Redfield; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 185.

[* 218] is equally without * power to appropriate the moneys in its treasury, or by the conduct of its officers to subject itself to implied obligations.¹

The powers conferred upon the municipal governments must also be construed as confined in their exercise to the territorial limits embraced within the municipality; and the fact that these powers are conferred in general terms will not warrant their exercise except within those limits. A general power "to purchase, hold, and convey estate, real and personal, for the public use" of the corporation, will not authorize a purchase outside the corporate limits for that purpose.² Without some special provision they cannot, as of course, possess any control or rights over lands lying outside;³ and the taxes they levy of their own authority and the moneys they expend, must be for local purposes only.⁴

But the question is a very different one how far the legislature of the State may authorize the corporation to extend its action to objects outside the city limits, and to engage in enterprises of a public nature which may be expected to benefit the citizens of the municipality in common with the people of the State at large, and also in some special and peculiar manner, but which nevertheless are not under the control of the corporation, and are so

¹ "In determining whether the subject-matter is within the legitimate authority of the town, one of the tests is to ascertain whether the expenses were incurred in relation to a subject specially placed by law in other hands. . . . It is a decisive test against the validity of all grants of money by towns for objects liable to that objection, but it does not settle questions arising upon expenditures for objects not specially provided for. In such cases the question will still recur, whether the expenditure was within the jurisdiction of the town. It may be safely assumed that, if the subject of the expenditure be in furtherance of some duty enjoined by statute, or in exoneration of the citizens of the town from a liability to a common burden, a contract made in reference to it will be valid and binding upon the town." *Allen v. Taunton*, 19 Pick. 487. See *Tucker v.*

Virginia City, 4 Nev. 20. It is no objection to the validity of an act which authorizes an expenditure for a town-hall that rooms to be rented for stores are contained in it. *White v. Stamford*, 37 Conn. 578.

² *Riley v. Rochester*, 9 N. Y. 64. See *Tucker v. Coldwater*, 36 Mich.

³ Per *Kent*, Chancellor, *Denton v. Jackson*, 2 Johns. Ch. 336. And see *Bullock v. Curry*, 2 Met. (Ky.) 171; *Weaver v. Cherry*, 8 Ohio, n. s. 564; *North Hempstead v. Hempstead*, Hopk. 294; *Concord v. Boscawen*, 17 N. H. 465; *Tucker v. Coldwater*, 36 Mich.

⁴ In *Parsons v. Goshen*, 11 Pick. 396, the action of a town appropriating money in aid of the construction of a county road, was held void and no protection to the officers who had expended it. See also *Concord v. Boscawen*, 17 N. H. 465.

far aside from the ordinary purposes of local governments that assistance by the municipality in such enterprises would not be warranted under any general grant of power for municipal government. For a few years past the sessions of the legislative bodies of the several States have been prolific in * legislation which has resulted in flooding the country [* 214] with municipal securities issued in aid of works of public improvement, to be owned, controlled, and operated by private parties, or by corporations created for the purpose; the works themselves being designed for the convenience of the people of the State at large, but being nevertheless supposed to be specially beneficial to certain localities because running near or through them, and therefore justifying, it is supposed, the imposition of a special burden by taxation upon such localities to aid in their construction.¹ We have elsewhere² referred to cases in which it has been held that the legislature may constitutionally authorize cities, townships, and counties to subscribe to the stock of railroad companies, or to loan them their credit, and to tax their citizens to pay these subscriptions, or the bonds or other securities issued as loans, where a peculiar benefit to the municipality was anticipated from the improvement. The rulings in these cases, if sound, must rest upon the same right which allows such municipalities to impose burdens upon their citizens to construct local streets or roads, and they can only be defended on the ground that "the object to be accomplished is so obviously connected with the [municipality] and its interests as to conduce obviously and in a special manner to their prosperity and advancement."³

¹ In *Merrick v. Inhabitants of Amherst*, 12 Allen, 500, it was held competent for the legislature to authorize a town to raise money by taxation for a State agricultural college, to be located therein. The case, however, we think, stands on different reasons from those where aid has been voted by municipalities to public improvements. See it explained in *Jenkins v. Andover*, 103 Mass. 94. And see similar cases referred to, *post*, p. *230, note.

² *Ante*, p. *119.

³ *Talbot v. Dent*, 9 B. Monr. 526. See *Hasbrouck v. Milwaukee*, 13 Wis.

44. It seems not inappropriate to remark in this place that the three authors who have treated so ably of municipal constitutional law (Mr. Sedgwick, *Stat. & Const. Law*, 464), of railway law (Judge Redfield), and of municipal corporations (Judge Dillon) have all united in condemning this legislation as unsound and unwarranted by the principles of constitutional law. See the views of the two writers last named in note to the case of *People v. Township Board of Salem*, 9 Am. Law Reg. 487. And Judge Dillon well remarks in his *Treatise on Municipal Corporations*

But there are authorities which dispute their soundness, and it cannot be denied that this species of legislation has been exceed-

(§ 104) that, "regarded in the light of its effects, there is little hesitation in affirming that this invention to aid private enterprises has proved itself baneful in the last degree."

If we trace the beginning of this legislation, we shall find it originating at a time when there had been little occasion to consider with care the limitations to the functions of municipal government, because as yet those functions had been employed with general caution and prudence, and no disposition had been manifested to stretch their powers to make them embrace matters not usually recognized as properly and legitimately falling within them, or to make use of the municipal machinery to further private ends. Nor did the earliest decisions attract much attention, for they referred to matters somewhat local, and the spirit of speculation was not as yet rife. When the construction of railways and canals was first entered upon by an expenditure of public funds to any considerable extent, the States themselves took them in charge, and for a time appropriated large sums and incurred immense debts in enterprises, some of which were of high importance and others of little value, the cost and management of which threatened them at length with financial disaster, bankruptcy, and possible repudiation. No long experience was required to demonstrate that railways and canals could not be profitably, prudently, or safely managed by the shifting administrations of State government; and many of the States not only made provision for disposing of their interest in works of public improvement, but, in view of a bitter experience of the evils already developed in undertaking to construct and control them, they amended their constitutions so as to

prohibit the State, when again the fever of speculation should prevail, from engaging anew in such undertakings.

All experience shows, however, that men are abundant who do not scruple to evade a constitutional provision which they find opposed to their desires, if they can possibly assign a plausible reason for doing so; and in the case of the provisions before referred to, it was not long before persons began to question their phraseology very closely, not that they might arrive at the actual purpose,—which indeed was obvious enough,—but to discover whether that purpose might not be defeated without a violation of the express terms. The purpose clearly was to remand all such undertakings to private enterprise, and to protect the citizens of the State from being taxed to aid them; but while the State was forbidden to engage in such works, it was unfortunately not expressly declared that the several members of the State, in their corporate capacity, were also forbidden to do so. The conclusion sought and reached was that the agencies of the State were at liberty to do what was forbidden to the State itself, and the burden of debt which the State might not directly impose upon its citizens, it might indirectly place upon their shoulders by the aid of municipal action.

The legislation adopted under this construction some of the courts felt compelled to sustain, upon the accepted principle of constitutional law that no legislative authority is forbidden to the legislature unless forbidden in terms; and the voting of municipal aid to railroads became almost a matter of course wherever a plausible scheme could be presented by interested parties to invite it. In

ingly mischievous in its results, that it has created a great burden of public debt, for which in a large number of cases the antici-

some localities, it is true, vigorous protest was made; but as the handling of a large amount of public money was usually expected to make the fortune of the projectors, whether the enterprise proved successful or not, means either fair or unfair were generally found to overcome all opposition. Towns sometimes voted large sums to railroads on the ground of local benefit where the actual and inevitable result was local injury, and the projectors of one scheme succeeded in obtaining and negotiating the bonds of one municipality to the amount of a quarter of a million dollars, which are now being enforced, though the work they were to aid was never seriously begun. A very large percentage of all the aid voted was paid to "work up the aid," sacrificed in discounts to purchasers of bonds, expended in worthless undertakings, or otherwise lost to the tax-payers; and the cases might almost be said to be exceptional in which municipalities, when afterwards they were called upon to meet their obligations, could do so with a feeling of having received the expected consideration. Some State and territorial governors did noble work in endeavoring to stay this reckless legislative and municipal action, and some of the States at length rendered such action impossible by constitutional provisions so plain and positive that the most ingenious mind was unable to misunderstand or pervert them.

When the United States entered upon a scheme of internal improvement, the Cumberland road was the first important project for which its revenues were demanded. The promises of this enterprise were of continental magnificence and importance, but they ended after heavy national expenditures in a road no more na-

tional than a thousand others which the road-masters in the several States have constructed with the local taxes; and it was finally abandoned to the States as a common highway. When next a great national scheme was broached, the aid of the general government was demanded by way of subsidies to private corporations, who presented schemes of works of great public convenience and utility, which were to open up the new territories to improvement and settlement sooner than the business of the country would be likely to induce unaided private capital to do it, and which consequently appealed to the imagination rather than to facts to demonstrate their importance, and afforded abundant opportunity for sharp operators to call to their assistance the national sentiment, then peculiarly strong and active by reason of the attempt recently made to overthrow the government, in favor of projects whose national importance in many cases the imagination alone could discover. The general result was the giving away of immense bodies of land, and in some cases the granting of pecuniary aid, with a recklessness and often with an appearance of corruption that at length startled the people, and aroused a public spirit before which the active spirits in Congress who had promoted these grants, and sometimes even demanded them in the name of the poor settler in the wilderness who was unable to get his crops to market, were compelled to give way. The scandalous frauds connected with the Pacific Railway, which disgraced the nation in the face of the world, and the great and disastrous financial panic of 1873, were legitimate results of such subsidies; but the pioneer in the wilderness had long before discovered that land grants

pated benefit was never received, and that, as is likely to be the case where municipal governments take part in projects foreign

were not always sought or taken with a view to an immediate appropriation to the roads for the construction of which they were nominally made, but that the result in many cases was, that large tracts were thereby kept out of market and from taxation which otherwise would have been purchased and occupied by settlers who would have lessened his taxes by contributing their share to the public burdens. The grants, therefore, in such cases, instead of being at once devoted to improvements for the benefit of settlers, were in fact kept in a state of nature by the speculators who had secured them, until the improvements of settlers in their vicinity could make the grantees wealthy by the increase in value which such improvements gave to the land near them. In saying this the admission is freely made that in many cases the grants were promptly and honestly appropriated in accordance with their nominal purpose; but the general verdict now is that the system was necessarily corruptive and tended to invite fraud, and that some persons of influence managed to accumulate great wealth by grants indirectly secured to themselves under the unfounded pretence of a desire to aid and encourage the pioneers in the wilderness.

Some States also have recently in their corporate capacity again engaged in issuing bonds to subsidize private corporations, with the natural result of serious State scandals, State insolvency, public discontent, and in some cases it would seem almost inevitable repudiation. Their governments, amid the disorders of the times, have fallen into the hands of strangers and novices, and the hobby of public improvement has been ridden furiously under the spur of individual greed.

It has often been well remarked

that the abuse of a power furnishes no argument against its existence; but a system so open to abuses may well challenge attention to its foundations. And when those foundations are examined, it is not easy to find for them any sound support in the municipal constitutional law of this country. The same reasons which justify subsidies to the business of common carriers by railway will support taxation in aid of any private business whatsoever.

It is sometimes loosely said that railway companies are public corporations, but the law does not so regard them. It is the settled doctrine of the law that, like banks, mining companies, and manufacturing companies, they are mere private corporations, supposed to be organized for the benefit of the individual corporators, and subject to no other public supervision or control than any other private association for business purposes to which corporate powers have been granted. *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 Wheat. 668; *Buonaparte v. Camden and Amboy R. R. Co.*, Baldw. 205; *Eustis v. Parker*, 1 N. H. 237; *Ohio, &c. R. R. Co. v. Ridge*, 5 Blackf. 78; *Cox v. Louisville &c. R. R. Co.*, 48 Ind. 178, 189; *Roanoke, &c. R. R. Co. v. Davis*, 2 Dev. & Bat. 451; *Dearborn v. Boston & M. R. R. Co.*, 4 Fost. 179; *Trustees, &c. v. Auburn, &c. R. R. Co.*, 3 Hill, 570; *Tinsman v. Belvidere, &c. R. R. Co.*, 2 Dutch. 148; *Thorpe v. Rutland, &c. R. R. Co.*, 27 Vt. 155; *Alabama R. R. Co. v. Kidd*, 29 Ala. 221; *Turnpike Co. v. Wallace*, 8 Watts, 316; *Seymour v. Turnpike Co.*, 10 Ohio, 476; *Ten Eyck v. D. & R. Canal*, 3 Harr. 200; *Atlantic, &c. Telegraph Co. v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 6 Biss. 158; *A. & A. on Corp.* §§ 30-36; *Redf. on Railw. c. 3, § 1*;

to the purposes of their creation, it has furnished unusual facilities for fraud and public plunder, and led almost inevitably, at

Pierce on Railroads, 19, 20. Taxation to subsidize them cannot therefore be justified on the ground of any public character they possess, any more than to subsidize banks or mining companies. It is truly said that it has long been the settled doctrine that the right of eminent domain may be employed in their behalf, and it has sometimes been insisted with much earnestness that wherever the State may aid an enterprise under the right of eminent domain, it may assist it by taxation also. But the right of taxation and the right of eminent domain are by no means coextensive, and do not rest wholly upon like reasons. The former compels the citizen to contribute his proportion of the public burden; the latter compels him to part with nothing for which he is not to receive pecuniary compensation. The tax in the one case is an exaction, the appropriation in the other is only a forced sale. To take money for private purposes under pretence of taxation is, as has been often said, but robbery and plunder; to appropriate under the right of eminent domain for a private corporation robs no one, because the corporation pays for what is taken, and in some cases, important to the welfare and prosperity of the community, and where a public convenience is to be provided, — as in the case of a grist mill, — it has long been held competent to exercise the one power, while the other was conceded to be inadmissible. Few persons would attempt to justify a tax in aid of a mill-owner, on the ground that laws appropriating lands for his benefit, but at his expense, have been supported.

The truth is, the right to tax in favor of private corporations of any description must rest upon the broad ground that the power of the legis-

lature, subject only to the express restrictions of the constitution, is supreme, and that, in the language of some of the cases, "if there be the least possibility that making the gift will be promotive in any degree of the public welfare, it becomes a question of policy, and not of natural justice, and the determination of the legislature is conclusive." (*Post*, p. *489.) But nothing is better settled on authority than that this strong language, though entirely true when it refers to the making provision for those things which it falls within the province of government to provide for its citizens, or to the payment for services performed for the State, or the satisfaction of legal, equitable, or moral obligations resting upon it, is wholly inadmissible when the purpose is to impose a burden upon one man for the benefit of another. Many such cases might be suggested in which there would not only be a "possibility," but even a strong probability, that a small burden imposed upon the public to set an individual up in business, or to build him a house, or otherwise make him comfortable, would be promotive of the public welfare; but in law the purpose of any such burden is deemed private, and the incidental benefit to the public is not recognized as an admissible basis of taxation.

In *Allen v. Inhabitants of Jay*, 60 Me. 124, s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 185, it became necessary to reaffirm a doctrine, often declared by the courts, that however great was the power to tax, it was exceeded, and the legislature was attempting the exercise of a power not legislative in its character, when it undertook to impose a burden on the public for a private purpose. And it was also held that the raising of money by tax in order to

last, to discontent ; sometimes even to disorder and violence. In some of the recent revisions of State constitutions, the legislature has been expressly prohibited from permitting the municipalities to levy taxes or incur debts in aid of works of public improvement, or to become stockholders in private corporations.¹

loan the same to private parties to enable them to erect mills and manufactories in such town, was raising it for a private purpose, and therefore illegal. *Appleton*, Ch. J., most truly remarks in that case, that "all security of private rights, all protection of private property, is at an end, when one is compelled to raise money to loan at the will of others for their own use and benefit, when the power is given to a majority to lend or give away the property of an unwilling minority." And yet how plain it is that the benefit of the local public might possibly have been promoted by the proposed erections! See to the same effect *Loan Association v. Topeka*, 20 Wall. 655, where the whole subject is carefully considered and presented with clearness and force in an opinion by Mr. Justice *Miller*; also *Commercial Bank v. Iola*, 2 Dill. C. C. 353; s. c. 9 Kan. 700; *Weisner v. Douglas*, 64 N. Y. 91; s. c. 21 Am. Rep. 586.

These cases are not singular: they are representative cases; and they are cited only because they are among the most recent expressions of judicial opinion on the subject. With them may be placed *Lowell v. Boston*, 111 Mass. 454, in which the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, after the great fire of 1872 in Boston, denied the power of the Commonwealth to permit taxation in order to loan the moneys out to the persons who had suffered by the fire. A like decision is found in *State v. Osawkee*, 14 Kan. 418. These decisions of eminent tribunals indicate a limit to legislative power in the matter of taxation, and hold, what has been decided very many times before, that it is not

necessary the constitution should forbid expressly the taxing for private purposes, since it is implied in the very idea of taxation that the purpose must be public, and a taking for any other purpose is unlawful confiscation. *Cooley on Taxation*, 67 *et seq.*

One difference there undoubtedly is between the case of a railroad corporation and a manufacturing corporation; that there are precedents in favor of taxing for the one and not for the other. But if the precedents are a departure from sound principle, then, as in every other case where principle is departed from, evils were to have been expected. A catalogue of these would include the squandering of the public domain; the enrichment of schemers whose policy it has been, first, to obtain all they can by fair promises, and then avoid as far and as long as possible the fulfilment of the promises; the corruption of legislation; the loss of State credit; great public debts recklessly contracted for moneys often recklessly expended; public discontent because the enterprises fostered from the public treasury and on the pretence of public benefit are not believed to be managed in the public interest; and, finally, great financial panic, collapse, and disaster. At such a cost has the strong expression of dissent which all the while has accompanied these precedents been disregarded and set aside.

¹ The following States have such provisions in their constitutions: Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Mississippi, Missouri, and New Hampshire. Many of the State constitutions expressly forbid State aid to private corporations of any sort, and it is

* Assuming that any such subscriptions or securities [* 215] may be authorized, the first requisite to their validity would seem, then, to be a special legislative authority to make or issue them ; an authority which does not reside in the general words in which the powers of local self-government are usually conferred,¹ and one also which must be carefully followed by the municipality in all essential particulars, or the subscription or security will be void.² And while mere irregularities of action, not going to the essentials of the power, would not prevent parties who had acted in reliance upon the securities enforcing them, yet as the doings of these corporations are matters of public record, and they have no general power to issue negotiable securities,³ any one who becomes holder of such securities, even though

probable that their provisions are broad enough in some cases to prohibit aid by the municipalities also.

¹ *Bullock v. Curry*, 2 Met. (Ky.) 171. A general power to borrow money or incur indebtedness to aid in the construction of "any road or bridge" must be understood to have reference only to the roads or bridges within the municipality. *Stokes v. Scott County*, 10 Iowa, 173; *State v. Wapello County*, 13 Iowa, 388; *Lafayette v. Cox*, 5 Ind. 38. There are decisions in the Supreme Court of the United States which appear to be to the contrary. The city charter of Muscatine conferred in detail the usual powers, and then authorized the city "to borrow money for any object in its discretion," after a vote of the city in favor of the loan. In *Meyer v. Muscatine*, 1 Wall. 384, the court seem to have construed this clause as authorizing a loan for *any object whatever*; though such phrases are understood usually to be confined in their scope to the specific objects before enumerated; or at least to those embraced within the ordinary functions of municipal governments. See *Lafayette v. Cox*, 5 Ind. 38. The case in 1 Wallace was followed in *Rogers v. Burlington*, 3 Wall. 654, four justices dissenting. See also

Mitchell v. Burlington, 4 Wall. 270. A municipal corporation having power to borrow money, it is held, may make its obligations payable wherever it shall agree. *Meyer v. Muscatine*, 1 Wall. 384; *Lynde v. County*, 16 Wall. 6. But some cases hold that such obligations can only be made payable at the corporation treasury, unless there is express legislative authority to make them payable elsewhere. *People v. Tazewell County*, 22 Ill. 147; *Pekin v. Reynolds*, 31 Ill. 529. Such corporations cannot give their obligations all the qualities of negotiable paper, without express legislative permission. *Dively v. Cedar Falls*, 21 Iowa, 565. See *Thomas v. Richmond*, 12 Wall. 349; *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* §§ 406, 407.

² See *Harding v. Rockford, &c. R. R. Co.*, 65 Ill. 90; *Dunnovan v. Green*, 57 Ill. 63; *Springfield, &c. R. R. Co. v. Cold Spring*, 72 Ill. 603; *People v. County Board of Cass*, 77 Ill. 438; *Cairo, &c. R. R. Co. v. Sparta*, 77 Ill. 505; *George v. Oxford*, 16 Kan. 72; *Hamlin v. Meadville* (Sup. Ct. Neb.), 2 West. Jurist, 596.

³ *Thompson v. Lee County*, 3 Wall. 327; *Police Jury v. Britton*, 15 Wall. 566; *Starin v. Genoa*, 23 N. Y. 447; *People v. Supervisors of El Dorado*, 11 Cal. 170; *Diveley v. Cedar Falls*,

they be negotiable in form, will take them with constructive notice of any want of power in the corporation to issue them, and cannot enforce them when their issue was unauthorized.¹

21 Iowa, 566; *Smith v. Cheshire*, 13 Gray, 318; *People v. Gray*, 23 Cal. 128; 23 Cal. 447. Compare *Emery v. Mariaville*, 56 Me. 315; *Sherrard v. Lafayette Co.*, 3 Dillon, 236.

¹ There is considerable confusion in the cases on this subject. If the corporation has no authority to issue negotiable paper, or if the officers who assume to do so have no power under the charter for that purpose, there can be no doubt that the defence of want of power may be made by the corporation in any suit brought on the securities. *Smith v. Cheshire*, 13 Gray, 318; *Gould v. Sterling*, 23 N. Y. 458; *Andover v. Grafton*, 7 N. H. 298; *Clark v. Des Moines*, 19 Iowa, 209; *M'Pherson v. Foster*, 43 Iowa, 48; *Bissell v. Kankakee*, 64 Ill. 249; *Big Grove v. Wells*, 65 Ill. 263; *Elmwood v. Marcy*, 92 U. S. Rep. 289; *Concord v. Portsmouth Savings Bank*, 92 U. S. Rep. 625; *St. Joseph v. Rogers*, 16 Wall. 644; *Pendleton Co. v. Amy*, 13 Wall. 297; *Marsh v. Fulton Co.*, 10 Wall. 676; *East Oakland v. Skinner*, 94 U. S. Rep. 255; *South Ottawa v. Perkins*, 94 U. S. Rep. 260; *McClure v. Oxford*, 94 U. S. Rep. 429. And in any case, if the holder has received the securities with notice of any valid defence, he takes them subject thereto. But where the corporation has power to issue negotiable paper in some cases, and its officers have assumed to do so in cases not within the charter, whether a *bona fide* holder would be chargeable with notice of the want of authority in the particular case, or, on the other hand, would be entitled to rely on the securities themselves as sufficient evidence that they were properly issued when nothing appeared on their face to apprise him of the

contrary, is a question still open to some dispute.

In *Stoney v. American Life Insurance Co.*, 11 Paige, 635, it was held that a negotiable security of a corporation which upon its face appears to have been duly issued by such corporation, and in conformity with the provisions of its charter, is valid in the hands of a *bona fide* holder thereof without notice, although such security was in fact issued for a purpose, and at a place not authorized by the charter of the company, and in violation of the laws of the State where it was actually issued. In *Gelpeeke v. Dubuque*, 1 Wall. 203, the law is stated as follows: "Where a corporation has power, under any circumstances, to issue negotiable securities, the *bona fide* holder has a right to presume they were issued under the circumstances which give the requisite authority, and they are no more liable to be impeached for any infirmity in the hands of such holder than any other commercial paper." See also *Commissioners of Knox Co. v. Aspinwall*, 21 How. 539; *Russell v. Jeffersonville*, 24 How. 287; *Lexington v. Butler*, 14 Wall. 282; *Thorn v. Commissioners of Miami Co.*, 2 Black, 722; *De Voss v. Richmond*, 18 Grat. 338; *San Antonio v. Lane*, 32 Tex. 405. In *Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank v. The Butchers' and Drovers' Bank*, 16 N. Y. 125, it is said: "A citizen who deals directly with a corporation, or who takes its negotiable paper, is presumed to know the extent of its corporate powers. But when the paper is, upon its face, in all respects such as the corporation has authority to issue, and its only defect consists in some extrinsic fact, — such as the purpose or object for which it

* In some of the cases involving the validity of the [* 216] subscriptions made or bonds issued by municipal cor-

was issued, — to hold that the person taking the paper must inquire as to such extraneous fact, of the existence of which he is in no way apprised, would obviously conflict with the whole policy of the law in regard to negotiable paper." In *Madison and Indianapolis Railroad Co. v. The Norwich Savings Society*, 24 Ind. 461, this doctrine is approved, and a distinction made, in the earlier case of *Smead v. Indianapolis, &c. Railroad Co.*, 11 Ind. 104, between paper executed *ultra vires* and that executed within the power of the corporation, but, by an abuse of the power in that particular instance, was repudiated. In *St. Joseph v. Rogers*, 16 Wall. 644, it was decided that where power is conferred to issue bonds, but only in a particular manner, or subject to certain regulations, conditions, or qualifications, and the bonds are actually issued with recitals showing compliance with the law, the proof that any of the recitals are incorrect will not constitute a defence to a suit on the bonds, "if it appears that it was the sole province of the municipal officers who executed the bonds to decide whether or not there had been an antecedent compliance with the regulation, condition, or qualification which it is alleged was not fulfilled." And see *Moran v. Commissioners of Miami Co.*, 2 Black, 722; *Pendleton Co. v. Amy*, 13 Wall. 297; *Chute v. Winegar*, 15 Wall. 355; *Venice v. Murdoch*, 92 U. S. Rep. 494; *Marcy v. Oswego*, 92 U. S. Rep. 637; *Humboldt v. Long*, 92 U. S. Rep. 642; *Douglas Co. v. Bolles*, 94 U. S. Rep. 104; *Johnson Co. v. January*, 94 U. S. Rep. 202; *Deming v. Houlton*, 64 Me. 254; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 253; *Carpenter v. Lathrop*, 51 Mo. 483; *Vicksburg v. Lombard*, 51 Miss. 111; *Pollard v. Pleasant Hill*, 3 Dillon,

195; *Davis v. Kendallville*, 5 Biss. 280. That neither irregularities in issuing bonds nor fraud in obtaining them will be a defence in the hands of *bona fide* holders, see foregoing cases, and also *Maxcy v. Williamson Co.*, 72 Ill. 207; *Nicolay v. St. Clair*, 3 Dillon, 163; *East Lincoln v. Davenport*, 94 U. S. Rep. 801. In *Halstead v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 5 Barb. 218, action was brought upon warrants drawn by the corporation of New York upon its treasurer, not in the course of its proper and legitimate business. It was held that the corporation under its charter had no general power to issue negotiable paper, though, not being prohibited by law, it might do so for any debt contracted in the course of its proper legitimate business. But it was also held that any negotiable securities not issued by the defendants in their proper and legitimate business, are void in the hands of the plaintiff, although received by him without actual notice of their consideration. This decision was affirmed in 3 N. Y. 430. In *Gould v. Town of Stirling*, 23 N. Y. 464, it was held that where a town had issued negotiable bonds, which could only be issued when the written assent of two-thirds of the resident persons taxed in the town had been obtained and filed in the county clerk's office, the bonds issued without such assent were invalid, and that the purchaser of them could not rely upon the recital in the bonds that such assent had been obtained, but must ascertain for himself at his peril. Say the court: "One who takes a negotiable promissory note or bill of exchange, purporting to be made by an agent, is bound to inquire as to the power of the agent. Where the agent is appointed and the power conferred, but the right to exercise the power

[* 217] porations in aid of internal *improvements, there has been occasion to consider clauses in the State constitu-

has been made to depend upon the existence of facts of which the agent may be supposed to be in an especial manner cognizant, the *bona fide* holder is protected; because he is presumed to have taken the paper upon the faith of the representation as to those facts. The mere fact of executing the note or bill amounts in itself, in such a case, to a representation by the agent to every person who may take the paper that the requisite facts exist. But the holder has no such protection in regard to the existence of the power itself. In that respect the subsequent *bona fide* holder is in no better situation than the payee, except in so far as the latter would appear of necessity to have had cognizance of facts which the other cannot [must?] be presumed to have known." And the case is distinguished from that of the Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank v. Butchers' and Drivers' Bank, 16 N. Y. 125, where the extrinsic fact affecting the authority related to the state of accounts between the bank and one of its customers, which could only be known to the teller and other officers of the bank. See also Brady v. Mayor, &c. of New York, 2 Bosw. 173; Hopple v. Brown Township, 13 Ohio, n. s. 311; Veeder v. Lima, 19 Wis. 280. The subject is reviewed in Clark v. Des Moines, 12 Iowa, 209. The action was brought upon city warrants, negotiable in form, and of which the plaintiff claimed to be *bona fide* assignee, without notice of any defects. The city offered to show that the warrants were issued without any authority from the city council, and without any vote of the council authorizing the same. It was held that the evidence should have been admitted, and that it would constitute a complete defence. See further Head v. Providence, &c. Co., 2

Cranch, 169; Royal British Bank v. Turquand, 6 El. & Bl. 827; Knox County v. Aspinwall, 21 How. 544; Bissell v. Jeffersonville, 24 How. 287; Sanborn v. Deerfield, 2 N. H. 254; Alleghany City v. McClurken, 14 Penn. St. 88; Morris Canal and Banking Co. v. Fisher, 1 Stock. 667; Clapp v. Cedar Co., 5 Iowa, 15; Commissioners, &c. v. Cox, 6 Ind. 403; Madison and Indianapolis R. R. Co. v. Norwalk Savings Society, 24 Ind. 457; Bird v. Daggett, 97 Mass. 494. It is of course impossible to reconcile these authorities; but the doctrine in the case of Gould v. Town of Stirling appears to us to be sound, and that, wherever a want of power exists, a purchaser of the securities is chargeable with notice of it, if the defect is disclosed by the corporate records, or, as in that case, by other records, where the power is required to be shown. See Fish v. Kenosha, 26 Wis. 24, and McClure v. Oxford, 94 U. S. Rep. 429. That the powers of the agents of municipal corporations are matters of record, and the corporation not liable for an unauthorized act, see further Baltimore v. Eschbach, 18 Md. 276; Johnson v. Common Council, 16 Ind. 227. That bonds voted to one railroad company and issued to another are void, see Big Grove v. Wells, 65 Ill. 263. Those who deal with a corporation must take notice of the restrictions in its charter, or in the general law, regarding the making of contracts. Brady v. Mayor, &c. of New York, 2 Bosw. 173; s. c. 20 N. Y. 312; Swift v. Williamsburg, 24 Barb. 427; Zabriskie v. Cleveland, &c. R. R. Co., 23 How. 381; Hull v. Marshall County, 12 Iowa, 142; Clark v. Des Moines, 19 Iowa, 199; McPherson v. Foster, 43 Iowa, 48; Marsh v. Supervisors of Fulton Co., 10 Wall. 676.

tions designed to limit the power of the *legislature [*218] to incur indebtedness on behalf of the State, and which clauses, it has been urged, were equally imperative in restraining indebtedness on behalf of the several political divisions of the State. The Constitution of Kentucky prohibited any act of the legislature authorizing any debt to be contracted on behalf of the Commonwealth, except for certain specified purposes, unless provision should be made in such act for an annual tax sufficient to pay such debt within thirty years; and the act was not to have effect unless approved by the people. It was contended that this provision was not to apply to the Commonwealth as a mere ideal abstraction, unconnected with her citizens and her soil, but to the Commonwealth as composed of her people, and their territorial organizations of towns, cities, and counties, which make up the State, and that it embraced in principle every legislative act which authorized a debt to be contracted by any of the local organizations of which the Commonwealth was composed. The courts of that State held otherwise. "The clause in question," they say, "applies in terms to a debt contracted on behalf the Commonwealth as a distinct corporate body; and the distinction between a debt on behalf of the Commonwealth, and a debt or debts on behalf of one county, or of any number of counties, is too broad and palpable to admit of the supposition that the latter class of *debts [*219] was intended to be embraced by terms specifically designating the former only." ¹ The same view has been taken by the courts of Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Kansas, of the provisions in the constitutions of those States restricting the power

If they are not valid, no subsequent ratification by the corporation can make them so. *Leavenworth v. Rankin*, 2 Kan. 357. If bonds are voted upon a condition, and issued before the condition is complied with, this, as to *bona fide* holders, is a waiver of the condition. *Chiniquy v. People*, 78 Ill. 570. Compare *Supervisors of Jackson v. Brush*, 77 Ill. 59.

In some States, after paper has been put afloat under laws which the courts of the State have sustained, it is very justly held that the validity

and obligation of such paper will not be suffered to be impaired by subsequent action of the courts overruling their former conclusions. See *Steines v. Franklin County*, 48 Mo. 167; *Osage, &c. R. R. Co. v. Morgan County*, 53 Mo. 156; *Smith v. Clark Co.*, 54 Mo. 58; *State v. Sutterfield*, 54 Mo. 391; *Columbia Co. v. King*, 13 Fla. 421; *Same v. Davidson*, 13 Fla. 482.

¹ *Slack v. Railroad Co.*, 13 B. Monr. 16.

of the legislature to contract debts on behalf of the State in aid of internal improvements;¹ but the decisions of the first-named State have since been doubted,² and those in Illinois, it would seem, overruled.³ In Michigan it has been held that they were inapplicable to a constitution adopted with a clear purpose to preclude taxation for such enterprises.⁴

¹ *Dubuque County v. Railroad Co.*, 4 Greene (Iowa), 1; *Clapp v. Cedar County*, 5 Iowa, 15; *Clark v. Janesville*, 10 Wis. 186; *Bushnell v. Beloit*, 10 Wis. 195; *Prettyman v. Supervisors*, 19 Ill. 406; *Robertson v. Rockford*, 21 Ill. 451; *Johnson v. Stark County*, 24 Ill. 75; *Perkins v. Lewis*, 24 Ill. 208; *Butler v. Dunham*, 27 Ill. 474; *Leavenworth Co. v. Miller*, 7 Kan. 479.

² *State v. Wapello County*, 13 Iowa, 388. And see *People v. Supervisor, &c.*, 16 Mich. 254.

³ In *People v. Mayor, &c. of Chicago*, 51 Ill. 84, it is held expressly that the provision of the State constitution prohibiting the State from creating a debt exceeding fifty thousand dollars without the consent of the people manifested at a general election, would preclude the State from creating a like debt against a municipal corporation, except upon the like conditions. And it was pertinently said: "The protection of the whole implies necessarily the protection of all its organized parts, and the whole cannot be secure while all or any of its parts are exposed to danger. What is the real value of this provision of the constitution if the legislature, inhibited from incurring a debt beyond fifty thousand dollars on behalf of the State, may force a debt tenfold or one hundred-fold greater—for there is no limit to the power—upon all the cities of the State? We can perceive none." We do not see how this can be reconciled with the earlier Illinois cases, and it is so manifestly right, it is hoped the

learned court will never make the attempt.

⁴ The following extract from the opinion in *Bay City v. State Treasurer*, 23 Mich. 504, is upon this point: "Our State had had a bitter experience of the evils of the government connecting itself with works of public improvement. In a time of inflation and imagined prosperity, the State had contracted a large debt for the construction of a system of railroads, and the people were oppressed with heavy taxation in consequence. Moreover, for a portion of this debt they had not received what they bargained for, and they did not recognize their legal or moral obligation to pay for it. The good name and fame of the State suffered in consequence. The result of it all was that a settled conviction fastened itself upon the minds of our people, that works of internal improvement should be private enterprises; that it was not in the proper province of government to connect itself with their construction or management, and that an imperative State policy demanded that no burdens should be imposed upon the people by State authority, for any such purpose. Under this conviction they incorporated in the constitution of 1850, under the significant title of 'Finance and Taxation,' several provisions expressly prohibiting the State from being a party to, or interested in, any work of internal improvement, or engaged in carrying on any such work, except in the expenditure of grants made to it; and also from subscribing to, or being inter-

- Another class of legislation, which has recently demanded the attention of the courts, has been little less troublesome, from the

ested in, the stock of any company, association, or corporation, or loaning its credit in aid of any person, association, or corporation. Art. XIV. §§ 9, 8, and 7.

"All these provisions were incorporated by the people on the constitution, as precautions against injudicious action by themselves, if in another time of inflation and excitement they should be tempted to incur the like burdensome taxation in order to accomplish public improvements in cases where they were not content to wait the result of private enterprise. The people meant to erect such effectual barriers that if the temptation should return, the means of inflicting the like injury upon the credit, reputation, and prosperity of the State, should not be within the reach of the authorities. They believed these clauses of the constitution accomplished this purpose perfectly, and none of its provisions had more influence in recommending that instrument to the hearty good-will of the people.

"In process of time, however, a majority in the legislature were found willing, against the solemn warning of the executive, to resort again to the power of taxation in aid of internal improvement. It was discovered that though "the State" was expressly inhibited from giving such aid in any form, except in the disposition of grants made to it, the subdivisions of which the State was composed were not under the like ban. Decisions in other States were found which were supposed to sanction the doctrine that, under such circumstances, the State might do indirectly through its subdivisions what directly it was forbidden to do. Thus a way was opened by which the whole purpose of the constitutional provisions quoted

might be defeated. The State could not aid a private corporation with its credit, but it might require each of its townships, cities, and villages to do so. The State could not load down its people with taxes for the construction of a public improvement, but it might compel the municipal authorities, which were its mere creatures, and which held their whole authority and their life at its will, to enforce such taxes, one by one, until the whole people were bent to the burden.

"Now, whatever might be the just and proper construction of similar provisions in the constitutions of States whose history has not been the same with our own, the majority of this court thought when the previous case was before us, and they still think, that these provisions in our constitution do preclude the State from loaning the public credit to private corporations, and from imposing taxation upon its citizens or any portion thereof in aid of the construction of railroads. So the people supposed when the constitution was adopted. Constitutions do not change with the varying tides of public opinion and desire; the will of the people therein recorded is the same inflexible law until changed by their own deliberative action; and it cannot be permissible to the courts that in order to aid evasions and circumventions, they shall subject these instruments, which in the main only undertake to lay down broad general principles, to a literal and technical construction, as if they were great public enemies standing in the way of progress, and the duty of every good citizen was to get around their provisions whenever practicable, and give them a damaging thrust whenever convenient. They must construe them, as the

new, varied, and peculiar questions involved, than that in relation to municipal subscriptions in aid of internal improvements. As the power to declare war and to conduct warlike operations rests in the national government, and that government is vested with unlimited control of all the resources of the country for those purposes, the duty of national defence, and, consequently, the duty to defend all the citizens as well as all the property of all the municipal organizations in the several States, rests upon the national authorities. This much is conceded, though in a qualified degree, also, and, subordinate to the national government, a like duty rests doubtless upon the State governments, which may employ the means and services of their citizens for the purpose. But it is no part of the duty of a township, city, or county, as such, to raise men or money for warlike operations, nor have they any authority, without express legislative sanction, to impose upon their people any burden by way of taxation for any such purpose.¹ Nevertheless, when a war arises which taxes all the energies of the nation, which makes it necessary to put into the field a large proportion of all the able-bodied men of the country, and which renders imperative a resort to all available means for filling the ranks of the army, recruiting the navy, and [* 220] replenishing the national treasury, the question * becomes a momentous one, whether the local organizations — those which are managed most immediately by the people themselves — may not be made important auxiliaries to the national and State governments in accomplishing the great object in which all alike are interested so vitally; and if they are capable of rendering important assistance, whether there is any constitutional principle which would be violated by making use of these organizations in a case where failure on the part of the central authority would precipitate general dismay and ruin. Indeed, as the general government, with a view to convenience, economy,

people did in their adoption, if the means of arriving at that construction are within their power. In these cases we thought we could arrive at it from the public history of the times."

¹ *Stetson v. Kempton*, 13 Mass. 272; *Gove v. Epping*, 41 N. H. 545; *Crowell v. Hopkinton*, 45 N. H. 9; *Baldwin v. North Branford*, 32 Conn.

47; *Webster v. Harwinton*, 32 Conn. 131. See also *Clafin v. Hopkinton*, 4 Gray, 502; *Cover v. Baytown*, 12 Minn. 124; *Fiske v. Hazzard*, 7 R. I. 438; *Alley v. Edgecomb*, 53 Me. 446; *People v. Supervisors of Columbia*, 43 N. Y. 130; *Walschlager v. Liberty*, 23 Wis. 362; *Burril v. Boston*, 2 Cliff. 590.

and promptness of action, will be very likely to adopt, for any purposes of conscription, the existing municipal divisions of the States, and its demand for men to recruit its armies will assume a form seeming to impose on the people whose municipal organization embraces the territory covered by the demand, the duty of meeting it, the question we have stated may appear to be one rather of form than of substance, inasmuch as it would be difficult to assign reasons why a duty resting upon the citizens of a municipality may not be considered as resting upon the corporation itself of which they are the constituents, and if so, why it may not be assumed by the municipality itself, and then be discharged in like manner as any other municipal burden, if the legislature shall grant permission for that purpose.

One difficulty that suggests itself in adopting any such doctrine is, that, by the existing law of the land, able-bodied men between certain specified ages are alone liable to be summoned to the performance of military duty; and if the obligation is assumed by the municipal organizations of the State, and discharged by the payment of money or the procurement of substitutes, the taxation required for this purpose can be claimed, with some show of reason, to be taxation of the whole community for the particular benefit of that class upon whom by the statutes the obligation rests. When the public funds are used for the purpose, it will be insisted that they are appropriated to discharge the liabilities of private individuals. Those who are already past the legal age of service, and who have stood their chance of being called into the field, or perhaps have actually rendered the required service, will be able to urge with considerable force that the State can no longer honorably and justly require them to contribute to the public defence, but ought to insist that those within the legal ages should perform their legal duty; and if any upon whom that duty rests shall actually have enrolled themselves in the army with a view to discharge it, such persons may claim, with even greater reason, that every consideration of *equality and justice demands that the property they [* 221] leave behind them shall not be taxed to relieve others from a duty equally imperative.

Much may be said on both sides of this subject, but the judicial decisions are clear, that the people of any municipal corporation or political division of a State have such a general interest in

relieving that portion of their fellow-citizens who are liable to the performance of military duty, as will support taxation or render valid indebtedness contracted for the purpose of supplying their places, or of filling any call of the national authorities for men, with volunteers who shall be willing to enter the ranks for such pecuniary inducements as may be offered them. The duty of national defence, it is held, rests upon every person under the protection of the government who is able to contribute to it, and not solely upon those who are within the legal ages. The statute which has prescribed those ages has for its basis the presumption that those between the limits fixed are best able to discharge the burden of military service to the public benefit, but others are not absolved from being summoned to the duty, if at any time the public exigency should seem to demand it. Exemption from military duty is a privilege rather than a right, and, like other statutory privileges, may be recalled at any time when reasons of public policy or necessity seem to demand the recall.¹ Moreover, there is no valid reason, in the nature of things, why those who are incapable of performing military service, by reason of age, physical infirmity, or other cause, should not contribute, in proportion to their ability, to the public defence by such means as are within their power; and it may well happen that taxation, for the purpose of recruiting the armies of the nation, will distribute the burden more equally and justly among all the citizens than any other mode which could be devised. Whether it will be just and proper to allow it in any instance must rest with the legislature to determine; but it is unquestionably competent, with legislative permission, for towns, cities, and counties to raise money by loans or by taxation to pay bounty moneys to those who shall volunteer to fill any call made upon such towns, cities, or counties to supply men for the national armies.²

¹ See *post*, p. *383, and cases cited in note.

² "The power to create a public debt, and liquidate it by taxation, is too clear for dispute. The question is, therefore, narrowed to a single point: Is the purpose in this instance a public one? Does it concern the common welfare and interest of the municipality? Let us see? Civil war

was raging, and congress provided in the second section of the act of 24th February, 1864, that the quota of the troops of each ward of a city, town, township, precinct, &c., should be as nearly as possible in proportion to the number of men resident therein liable to render military service. Section three provided that all volunteers who may enlist after a draft shall be or-

* Relief of the community from an impending or possible draft is not, however, the sole consideration which will support taxation by the municipal corporations of the State to raise money for the purpose of paying bounties to soldiers. Gratitude to those who have entered the military service, whether as volunteers or drafted men, or as substitutes for others who were drafted or were * liable to be, is a considera- [* 222] [* 223]

dered shall be deducted from the number ordered to be drafted in such ward, town, &c. Volunteers are therefore by law to be accepted in relief of the municipality from a compulsory service to be determined by lot or chance. Does the relief involve the public welfare or interest? The answer rises spontaneously in the breast of every one in the community liable to the military burden. It is given, not by the voice of him alone who owes the service, but swells into a chorus from his whole family, relatives, and friends. Military service is the highest duty and burden the citizen is called to obey or to bear. It involves life, limb, and health, and is therefore a greater 'burden' than the taxation of property. The loss or the injury is not confined to the individual himself, but extends to all the relations he sustains. It embraces those bound to him in the ties of consanguinity, friendship, and interest; to the community which must furnish support to his family, if he cannot, and which loses in him a member whose labor, industry, and property contribute to its wealth and its resources; who assists to bear its burdens, and whose knowledge, skill, and public spirit contribute to the general good. Clearly the loss of that part of the population upon whom the greatest number depend, and who contribute most to the public welfare, by their industry, skill, and property, and good conduct, is a common loss, and therefore a general injury. These are alike subject to the draft. The blind and relentless lot respects no age, condition, or rank

in life. It is, therefore, clearly the interest of the community that those should serve who are willing, whose loss will sever the fewest ties, and produce the least injury.

"The bounty is not a private transaction in which the individual alone is benefited. It benefits the public by inducing and enabling those to go who feel they can best be spared. It is not voluntary in those who pay it. The community is subject to the draft, and it is paid to relieve it from a burden of war. It is not a mere gift or reward, but a consideration for services. It is therefore not a confiscation of one man's property for another's use, but it is a contribution from the public treasury for a general good. In short, it is simply taxation to relieve the municipality from the stern demands of war, and avert a public injury in the loss of those who contribute most to the public welfare." *Speer v. School Directors of Blairsville*, 50 Penn. St. 159. See also *Waldo v. Portland*, 33 Conn. 363; *Bartholomew v. Harwinton*, 33 Conn. 408; *Fowler v. Danvers*, 8 Allen, 80; *Lowell v. Oliver*, 8 Allen, 247; *Washington County v. Berwick*, 56 Penn. St. 466; *Trustees of Cass v. Dillon*, 16 Ohio, N. S. 38; *State v. Wilkesbarre*, 20 Ohio, N. S. 292. Also *Opinions of Justices*, 52 Me. 595, in which the view is expressed that towns cannot, under the power to raise money for "necessary town charges," raise and pay commutation moneys to relieve persons drafted into the military service of the United States.

tion which the State may well recognize, and it may compensate the service either by the payment of bounty moneys directly to such persons, or by provision for the support of those dependent upon them while they shall be absent from their homes. Whether we regard such persons as public benefactors, who, having taken upon themselves the most severe and dangerous duty a citizen is ever called upon to perform, have thereby entitled themselves to public reward as an incentive to fidelity and courage, or as persons who, having engaged in the public service for a compensation inadequate to the toil, privation, and danger incurred, are deserving of the bounty as a further recognition on the part of the community of the worth of their services, there seems in either case to be no sufficient reason to question the right of the legislature to authorize the municipal divisions of the State to raise moneys in any of the usual modes, for the purpose of paying bounties to them or their families, [* 224] in recognition of such services.¹ * And if a municipal corporation shall have voted moneys for such purpose without legislative authority, it is competent for the [* 225] * legislature afterwards to legalize their action if it shall so choose.²

¹ The act under which the Pennsylvania case, cited in the preceding note, was decided, authorized the borough to contract a debt for the payment of three hundred dollars to each non-commissioned officer and private who might thereafter volunteer and enter the service of the United States, and be credited upon the quota of the borough under an impending draft. The whole purpose, therefore, was to relieve the community from the threatened conscription. But in the case of *Brodhead v. Milwaukee*, 19 Wis. 652, it was held constitutional, not only to provide for the future by such municipal taxation, but also to raise moneys to pay bounties to volunteers previously enlisted, and even to those who should thereafter procure substitutes for themselves, and have them credited on the municipal quota.

² *Booth v. Town of Woodbury*, 32

Conn. 118; *Bartholomew v. Harwinton*, 83 Conn. 408; *Crowell v. Hopkinton*, 45 N. H. 9; *Shackford v. Newington*, 46 N. H. 415; *Lowell v. Oliver*, 8 Allen, 247; *Ahl v. Gleim*, 52 Penn. St. 432; *Weister v. Hade*, 52 Penn. St. 474; *Coffman v. Keightley*, 24 Ind. 509; *Board of Commissioners v. Brearss*, 25 Ind. 110; *Connor v. Fulsom*, 18 Minn. 219; *State v. Demorest*, 32 N. J. 528; *Taylor v. Thompson*, 42 Ill. 9; *Barbour v. Camden*, 51 Me. 608; *Hart v. Holden*, 55 Me. 572; *Burnham v. Chelsea*, 43 Vt. 69; *Butler v. Pultney*, 43 Vt. 481. In *State v. Jackson*, 33 N. J. 450, a statute authorizing a town to raise money by tax to relieve its inhabitants from the burden of a draft under a law of Congress, was held void as tending to defeat the purpose of such law. The decision was made by a bare majority of a bench of eleven judges. Compare *O'Hara v. Carpen-*

* The cases to which we have referred in the notes [* 226] assume that, if the purpose is one for which the State might properly levy a tax upon its citizens at large, the legislature would also have power to apportion and impose the duty, or confer the power of assuming it upon the towns and other municipal or political divisions. And the rule laid down is one which opens a broad field to legislative discretion, allowing as it does the raising and * appropriation of moneys, [* 227] whenever, in the somewhat extravagant words of one of the cases, there is "the least possibility that it will be promotive in any degree of the public welfare."¹ The same rule, substantially, has been recognized by the Court of Appeals of New York. "The legislature is not confined in its appropriation of the public moneys, or of the sums to be raised by taxation in favor of individuals, to cases in which a legal demand exists against the State. It can thus recognize claims founded in equity and justice in the largest sense of these terms, or in gratitude or charity. Independently of express constitutional restrictions, it can make appropriations of money whenever the public well-being requires or will be promoted by it, and it is the judge of what is for the public good. It can, moreover, under the power to levy taxes, apportion the public burdens among all the tax-paying citizens of the State, or among those of a particular section or political division."² And where citizens have voluntarily advanced moneys for the purpose of paying bounties to recruits who fill the quota of a municipal corporation, on an understanding, based upon informal corporate action, that the moneys should be refunded when a law should be passed permitting it, a subsequent act of the legislature authorizing taxation for this purpose is valid.³

However broad are the terms employed in describing the legislature, 23 Mich. 410, in which a contract of insurance against a military draft was held void on grounds of public policy.

¹ Booth v. Woodbury, 32 Conn. 128, per Butler, J. "To make a tax law unconstitutional on this ground, it must be apparent at first blush that the community taxed can have no possible interest in the purpose to which their money is to be applied."

Sharpless v. Mayor, &c., 21 Penn. St. 174, following Cheaney v. Hooser, 9 B. Monr. 345.

² Guilford v. Supervisors of Chenango, 13 N. Y. 149.

³ Weister v. Hade, 52 Penn. St. 474. And see People v. Sullivan, 43 Ill. 413; Johnson v. Campbell, 49 Ill. 316. Compare Susquehanna Depot v. Barry, 61 Penn. St. 317.

lative power over taxation in these cases, it is believed that no one of them has gone so far as to sanction taxation or the appropriation of the public revenue in order to refund to individuals moneys which they may have paid to relieve themselves from an impending draft, or may have voluntarily contributed to any public purpose, from motives purely personal to themselves, without any reason to rely upon the credit of the State, or of any municipal corporation, for reimbursement, and where the circumstances are not such as fairly to challenge the public gratitude. Taxation in such a case, where no obligation, honorary or otherwise, rests upon the public, would be nothing else than a naked case of appropriating the property of the tax-payer for private purposes, and that, too, without reference to anticipated public benefits.¹

¹ *Tyson v. School Directors, &c.*, 51 Penn. St. 9. A meeting of persons liable to draft under the law of the United States was called, and an association formed, called the Halifax Bounty Association, which levied an assessment of thirty dollars on each person liable to military duty in the township, and solicited contributions from others. Afterwards, an act was passed by the legislature, with a preamble reciting that certain citizens of Halifax township, associated as the Halifax Bounty Association, for freeing the said township from the late drafts, advanced moneys, which were expended in paying bounties to volunteers to fill the quota of the township. The act then authorized and required the school directors to borrow such sums of money as would fully reimburse the said Halifax Bounty Association for moneys advanced to free said township from the draft, and then further authorized the school directors to levy and collect a tax to repay the sums borrowed. The court say: "We are bound to regard the statute as an authority to reimburse what was intended by the Association as advances made to the township with the intent or understanding to be reimbursed or returned

to those contributing. This was the light in which the learned judge below regarded the terms used; and unless this appears in support of the present levy by the school directors, they are acting without authority. But the learned judge, if I properly comprehend his meaning, did not give sufficient importance to these terms, and hence, I apprehend, he fell into error. He does not seem to have considered it essential whether the Association paid its money voluntarily in aid of its own members, or expressly to aid the township in saving its people from a draft, with the understanding that it was advanced in the character of a loan if the legislature chose to direct its repayment; and the school directors chose to act on the authority conferred. This we cannot agree to. Such an enactment would not be legislation at all. It would be in the nature of judicial action, it is true; but wanting the justice of notice to the parties to be affected by the hearing, trial, and all that gives sanction and force to regular judicial proceedings, it would much more resemble an imperial rescript than constitutional legislation: first, in declaring an obligation where none was created or previously existed; and next, in

* But it has been held by the Supreme Court of Mas- [* 228] sachusetts that towns might be authorized by the legislature to raise moneys by taxation for the purpose of refunding sums contributed by individuals to a common fund, in order to fill the quota of such towns under a call of the President, notwithstanding such moneys might have been contributed without promise or expectation of reimbursement. The court were of opinion that such contributions * might well be [* 229] considered as advancements to a public object, and, being such, the legislature might properly recognize the obligation and permit the towns to provide for its discharge.¹

* On a preceding page we have spoken in strong terms [* 230] of the complete control which is possessed by the legislative authority of the State over the municipal corporations. There are nevertheless some limits to its power in this regard, as there are in various other directions limits to the legislative power of the State. Some of these are expressly defined; others spring from the usages, customs, and maxims of our people; they are a part of its history, a part of the system of local self-government in view of the continuance and perpetuity of which all our constitutions are framed, and of the right to which the people can never be deprived except through express renunciation on their part. One undoubted right of the people is to choose, directly

decreeing payment by directing the money or property of the people to be sequestered to make the payment. The legislature can exercise no such despotic functions; and as it is not apparent in the act that they attempted to do so, we are not to presume that they did. They evidently intended the *advancements* to be reimbursed to be only such as were made on the faith that they were to be returned." See also *Crowell v. Hopkinton*, 45 N. H. 9; *Miller v. Grandy*, 13 Mich. 540; *Pease v. Chicago*, 21 Ill. 508; *Ferguson v. Landraw*, 5 Bush, 230; *Esty v. Westminster*, 97 Mass. 324; *Cole v. Bedford*, 97 Mass. 326; *Usher v. Colchester*, 33 Conn. 567; *Perkins v. Milford*, 59 Me. 315; *Thompson v. Pittston*, 59 Me. 545; *Kelly v. Marshall*, 69 Penn. St. 319.

In *Freeland v. Hastings*, 10 Allen, 570, it was held that the legislature could not empower towns to raise money by taxation for the purpose of refunding what had been paid by individuals for substitutes in military service. In *Cass v. Dillon*, 16 Ohio, n. s. 38, it was held that taxes to refund bounties previously and voluntarily paid might be authorized. See also *State v. Harris*, 17 Ohio, n. s. 608. The Supreme Court of Wisconsin, in the well-reasoned case of *State v. Tappan*, 29 Wis. 664, deny the power of the State to *compel* a municipal corporation to pay bounties where it has not voted to do so.

¹ *Freeland v. Hastings*, 10 Allen, 585. And see *Hilbish v. Catherman*, 64 Penn. St. 154, and compare *Tyson v. School Directors*, 51 Penn. St. 9.

irectly, under the forms and restrictions prescribed by the
ature for reasons of general State policy, the officers of local
nistration, and the board that is to make the local laws.
is a right which of late has sometimes been encroached upon
er various plausible pretences, but almost always with the
ult which reasonable men should have anticipated from the
periment of a body at a distance attempting to govern a local
community of whose affairs or needs they could know but little,
cept as they should derive information from sources likely to
ave interested reasons for misleading.¹ Another is the right of
he local community to determine what pecuniary burdens it shall
ake upon its shoulders. But here from the very nature of the
case there must be some limitations. The municipalities do not
exist wholly for the benefit of their corporators, but as a part of
the machinery of State government, and they cannot be permitted
to decline a performance of their duties or a discharge of their
obligations as such. They cannot abolish local government;
they cannot refuse to provide the conveniences for its adminis-
tration; they cannot decline to raise the necessary taxes for the
purpose; they cannot repudiate pecuniary obligations that justly
rest upon them as a local government. Over these matters the
legislature of the State must have control, or confusion would
inevitably be introduced into the whole system. But beyond
this it is not often legitimate for the State to go except in mould-
ing and shaping the local powers, and perhaps permitting the

¹ On this subject reference is made to what is said by *Campbell*, Ch. J., in *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 Mich. 87 *et seq.* See also p. 97. Much has been said concerning the necessity of legislative interference in some cases where bad men were coming into power through universal suffrage in cities, but the recent experience of the country shows that this has oftener been said to pave the way for bad men to obtain office or grants of unusual powers from the legislature than with any purpose to effect local reforms. And the great municipal scandals and frauds that have prevailed, like those which were so notorious in New York City, have been made possible and then nursed

and fostered by illegitimate interference at the seat of State government. Some officers, usually of local appointment, are undoubtedly to be regarded as State officers whose choice may be confided to a State authority without any invasion of local right; such as militia officers, officers of police, and those who have charge of the execution of the criminal laws; but those who are to administer the corporate funds and have the control of the corporate property, those who make the local laws and those who execute them, cannot rightfully be chosen by the central authority. *Dillon*, Mun. Corp. § 33. See *People v. Com. Council of Detroit*, 28 Mich. 228.

local authorities to do certain things for the benefit of their citizens which under the general grants of power would be inadmissible.¹

On this general subject we shall venture to lay down the following propositions as the result of the authorities:—

1. That the legislature has undoubted power to compel the municipal bodies to perform their functions as local governments under their charters, and to recognize, meet, and discharge the duties and obligations properly resting upon them as such, whether they be legal, or merely equitable or moral; and for this purpose it may require them to exercise the power of taxation whenever and wherever it may be deemed necessary or expedient.²

¹ This subject is discussed with some fulness in Cooley on Taxation, ch. xxi.

² In support of this, we refer to the very strong case of *Guilford v. Supervisors of Chenango*, 18 Barb. 615, s. c. 13 N. Y. 143, where a town was compelled by the legislative authority of the State to reimburse its officers the expenses incurred by them in the honest but mistaken endeavor to discharge what they believed to be their duty; also to *Sinton v. Ashbury*, 41 Cal. 580, in which it is said by *Crocket, J.*, that "It is established by an overwhelming weight of authority, and I believe is conceded on all sides, that the legislature has the constitutional power to direct and control the affairs and property of a municipal corporation *for municipal purposes*, provided it does not impair the obligation of a contract, and by appropriate legislation may so control its affairs as ultimately to compel it, out of the funds in its treasury, or by taxation to be imposed for that purpose, to pay a demand when properly established, which in good conscience it ought to pay, even though there be no legal liability to pay it" (citing *Blanding v. Burr*, 13 Cal. 343; *Beals v. Almador Co.*, 35 Cal. 624; *People v. Supervisors of San Francisco*, 11 Cal. 206; *Sharp v. Contra Costa Co.*,

34 Cal. 284; *People v. McCreery*, 34 Cal. 432; *People v. Alameda*, 26 Cal. 641, and holding that a city might be compelled to pay the claim of persons who had acted as commissioners in the extension of certain of its streets); also to *Borough of Dunmore's Appeal*, 52 Penn. St. 374, in which the legislature assumed the right of apportioning the indebtedness of a town among the boroughs carved out of it; supported by *Layton v. New Orleans*, 12 La. Ann. 515; *People v. Alameda*, 26 Cal. 641; and *Burns v. Clarion County*, 62 Penn. St. 423; also to *People v. Flagg*, 46 N. Y. 401, in which the legislative power to direct the construction of a public road, and to compel the creation of a town debt for the purpose, was fully sustained; to *People v. Power*, 25 Ill. 187; *Waterville v. County Commissioners*, 59 Me. 80; and to numerous other cases cited, *ante*, p. *193, note, and which we will not occupy space by repeating here. In *Creighton v. San Francisco*, 42 Cal. 446, it is said that the power of the legislature to appropriate the money of municipal corporations in payment of equitable claims to individuals, not enforceable in the courts, depends on the legislative conscience, and the judiciary will not interfere unless in exceptional cases. Unquestionably the legislature may

2. That in some cases, in view of the twofold character of such bodies, as being on the one hand agencies of State government, and on the other, corporations endowed with capacities and permitted to hold property and enjoy peculiar privileges for the benefit of their corporators exclusively, the legislature may permit the incurring of expense, the contracting of obligations, and the levy of taxes which are unusual, and which would not be admissible under the powers usually conferred. Instances of the kind may be mentioned in the offer of military bounties, and the payment of a disproportionate share of a State burden in consideration of peculiar local benefits which are to spring from it.¹

[* 231] * 3. But it is believed the legislature has no power, against the will of a municipal corporation, to compel it

decide what taxes shall be levied for proper purposes of local government. *Youngblood v. Sexton*, 32 Mich. 406.

¹ The subject of military bounties has been sufficiently referred to already. As to the right to permit a municipal corporation to burden itself with a local tax for a State object, we refer to *Merrick v. Amherst*, 12 Allen, 500; *Marks v. Trustees of Pardue University*, 37 Ind. 155; *Hasbrouck v. Milwaukee*, 13 Wis. 37. The first was a case in which, in consideration of the local benefits expected from the location of the State agricultural college in a certain town, the town was permitted to levy a large local tax in addition to its proportion of the State burden for the erection of the necessary buildings. The second case was of a similar nature. The third was the case of permission to levy a city tax to improve the city harbor; a work usually done by the general government. There are cases which go further than these, and hold that the legislature may *compel* a municipal corporation to do what it may thus permit. Thus, in *Kirby v. Shaw*, 19 Penn. St. 258, it appeared that by an act of April 3, 1848, the commissioners of Bradford County were required to add \$500 annually, until 1857, to the usual county rates

and levies of the borough of Towanda in said county, for the purpose of defraying the expenses of the court house and jail, then in process of erection in that borough. The act was held constitutional on the principle of assessment of benefits. In *Gordon v. Cornes*, 47 N. Y. 608, a law was sustained which "authorized and required" the village of Brockport to levy a tax for the erection of a State normal school building at that place. It is to be said of this case, however, that there was to be in the building a grammar school free to all the children of proper acquirements in the village; so that the village was to receive a peculiar and direct benefit from it, besides those which would be merely incidental to the location of the normal school in the place. But for this circumstance it would be distinctly in conflict with *State v. Haben*, 22 Wis. 660, where it was held incompetent for the legislature to appropriate the school moneys of a city to the purchase of a site for a State normal school; and also with other cases cited in the next note. It must be conceded, however, that there are other cases which support it. And see, as supporting the last case, *Livingston County v. Weider*, 64 Ill. 427; *Burr v. Carbondall*, 76 Ill. 455.

to contract debts for local purposes in which the State has no concern, or to assume obligations not within the ordinary functions of municipal government. Such matters are to be disposed of in view of the interests of the corporators exclusively, and they have the same right to determine them for themselves which the associates in private corporations have to determine for themselves the questions which arise for their corporate action. The State in such cases may remove restrictions and permit action, but it cannot compel it.¹

¹ There are undoubtedly some cases which go to the extent of holding that municipal corporations and organizations are so completely under the legislative control, that whatever the legislature may *permit* them to do, it may *compel* them to do, whether the corporators are willing or not. A leading case is *Thomas v. Leland*, 24 Wend. 67. In that case it appeared that certain citizens of Utica had given their bond to the people of the State of New York, conditioned for the payment into the canal fund of the sum of \$38,615, the estimated difference between the cost of connecting the Chenango Canal with the Erie at Utica, instead of at Whitesborough, as the canal commissioners had contemplated; and it was held within the constitutional powers of the legislature to require this sum to be assessed upon the taxable property of the city of Utica, supposed to be benefited by the canal connection. The court treat the case as "the ordinary one of local taxation to make or improve a public highway," and dismiss it with few words. If it could be considered as merely a case of the apportionment between a number of municipalities of the expense of a public highway running through them, it would have the support of *Waterville v. County Commissioners*, 59 Me. 80; *Commonwealth v. Newburyport*, 103 Mass. 129; and also what is said in *Bay City v. State Treasurer*, 23 Mich. 503, where it is admitted that over the

matter of the construction of such a highway, as well as the apportionment of expense, the State authority must necessarily be complete. It has been considered in subsequent New York cases as a case of apportionment merely. See *People v. Brooklyn*, 4 N. Y. 437; *Howell v. Buffalo*, 87 N. Y. 271. The cases of *Kirby v. Shaw*, 19 Penn. St. 258, and *Gordon v. Cornes*, 47 N. Y. 608, referred to in the preceding note, it will be perceived, were also treated as cases merely of apportionment. How that can be called a case of apportionment, however, which singles out a particular town, and taxes it for benefits to be expected from a highway running across the State, without doing the same by any other town in the State, it is not easy to perceive. In *Commissioners of Revenue v. The State*, 45 Ala. 399, it appeared that the legislature had created a local board consisting of the president of the county commissioners of revenue of Mobile County, the mayor of Mobile, the president of the Bank of Mobile, the president of the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, and one citizen of Mobile, appointed by the governor, as a board for the improvement of the river, harbor, and bay of Mobile, and required the commissioners of revenue of Mobile County to issue to them for that purpose county bonds to the amount of \$1,000,000, and to levy a tax to pay them. Here was an appointment by the State of local offi-

[* 232] * 4. And there is much good reason for assenting also to what several respectable authorities have held, that

cers to make at the expense of the locality an improvement which it has been customary for the general government to take in charge as one of national concern; but the Supreme Court of the State sustained the act, going farther, as we think, in doing so, than has been gone in any other case. In *Hasbrouck v. Milwaukee*, 13 Wis. 37, approved and defended in an able opinion in *Mills v. Charleton*, 29 Wis. 413, the power of the legislature to compel the city of Milwaukee to issue bonds or levy a tax for the improvement of its harbor was distinctly denied, though it was conceded that permission might be given, which the city could lawfully act upon. Compare also *Knapp v. Grant*, 27 Wis. 147; *State v. Tappan*, 29 Wis. 664; *Atkins v. Randolph*, 31 Vt. 226. In *People v. Batchellor*, 53 N. Y. 128, the Court of Appeals, through an able and lucid opinion by *Grover, J.*, denied the validity of a mandatory statute compelling a town to take stock in a railroad corporation, and to issue its bonds in exchange therefor. The authority to permit the town to do this was not discussed, but, taking that as admitted, it is declared that municipal corporations, in the making or refusing to make arrangements of the nature of that attempted to be forced upon the town in question, were entitled to the same freedom of action precisely which individual citizens might claim. This opinion reviews the prior decisions in the same State, and finds nothing conflicting with the views expressed. In *People v. Mayor, &c. of Chicago*, 51 Ill. 17, s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 278, it was denied, in an opinion of great force and ability delivered by Chief Justice *Breese*, that the State could empower a board of park commissioners of State appointment to contract a debt for the

city of Chicago for the purposes of a public park for that city, and without the consent of its citizens. The learned judge says (p. 81): "Whilst it is conceded that municipal corporations, which exist only for public purposes, are subject at all times to the control of the legislature creating them, and have in their franchises no vested rights, and whose powers and privileges the creating power may alter, modify, or abolish at pleasure, as they are but parts of the machinery employed to carry on the affairs of the State, over which and their rights and effects the State may exercise a general superintendence and control, — *Richland County v. Lawrence County*, 12 Ill. 8; *Trustees of Schools v. Talmán*, 13 Ill. 80, — we are not of the opinion that that power, vast as it is, can be so used as to compel any one of our many cities to issue its bonds against its will, to erect a park, or for any other improvement, to force it to create a debt of millions; in effect, to compel every property owner in the city to give his bond to pay a debt thus forced upon the city. It will hardly be contended that the legislature can compel a holder of property in Chicago to execute his individual bond as security for the payment of a debt so ordered to be contracted. A city is made up of individuals owning property within its limits, the lots and blocks which compose it, and the structures which adorn them. What would be the universal judgment, should the legislature, *sua sponte*, project magnificent and costly structures within one of our cities, — triumphal arches, splendid columns, and perpetual fountains, — and require in the act creating them that every owner of property within the city limits should give his individual obligation for his proportion of the cost, and impose

where a demand is asserted against a municipality, though of a nature that the legislature would have a right to require it to incur and * discharge, yet if its legal and equitable [* 233]

such cost as a lien upon his property for ever. What would be the public judgment of such an act, and wherein would it differ from the act under consideration?" And again: "Here, then, is a case where taxes may be assessed, not by any corporate authority of the city, but by commissioners, to whom is intrusted the erection, embellishment, and control of this park, and this without consent of the property owners.

"We do not think it within the constitutional competency of the legislature to delegate this power to these commissioners. If the principle be admitted that the legislature can, uninvited, of their mere will, impose such a burden as this upon the city of Chicago, then one much heavier and more onerous can be imposed; in short, no limit can be assigned to legislative power in this regard. If this power is possessed, then it must be conceded that the property of every citizen within it is held at the pleasure and will of the legislature. Can it be that the General Assembly of the State, just and honest as its members may be, is the depository of the rights of property of the citizens? Would there be any sufficient security for property if such a power was conceded? No well-regulated mind can entertain the idea that it is within the constitutional competency of the legislature to subject the earnings of any portion of our people to the hazards of any such legislation."

This case should be read in connection with the following in the same State, and all in the same direction. *People v. Common Council of Chicago*, 51 Ill. 58; *Lovington v. Wider*, 53 Ill. 302; *People v. Canty*, 55 Ill. 33; *Wider v. East St. Louis*, 55 Ill. 133; *Gage v. Graham*, 57 Ill. 144;

East St. Louis v. Witts, 59 Ill. 155; *Marshall v. Silliman*, 61 Ill. 218; *Cairo, &c. R. R. Co. v. Sparta*, 77 Ill. 505. See also *People v. Common Council of Detroit*, 28 Mich. 228. That the legislature may compel a municipality to levy a tax for a local road, see *Wilcox v. Deer Lodge Co.*, 2 Montana, 574.

The case of *People v. Batchellor*, 53 N. Y. 128, seems to us clearly inconsistent with *Thomas v. Leland*, *supra*, and should be regarded as overruling it. But, on the other hand, the case of *Duanesburgh v. Jenkins*, 57 N. Y. 177, goes to the full extent of holding that a subscription of a town to a railroad, made on condition of subsequent assent of the town thereto, may be relieved of the condition by the legislature and enforced against the town, though the original subscription was by a commissioner which the town did not choose. It is a little difficult, therefore, to determine what the law of New York now is on this subject, especially as in *New York, &c. R. R. Co. v. Van Horn*, 57 N. Y. 473, the power of the legislature to make valid an ineffectual individual contract is denied. But leaving out of view the New York cases, and a few others which were decided on the ground of an apportionment of local benefits, we think the case in Alabama will stand substantially alone. Before that decision the Supreme Court of Illinois were able to say, in a case calling for a careful and thorough examination of the authorities, that counsel had "failed to find a case wherein it has been held that the legislature can compel a city against its will to incur a debt by the issue of its bonds for a local improvement." *People v. Mayor, &c.*, 51 Ill. 33.

obligation is disputed, the corporation has the right to have the dispute settled by the courts, and cannot be bound by a legislative allowance of the claim.¹

¹ It was held in *People v. Hawes*, 37 Barb. 440, that the legislature had no right to direct a municipal corporation to satisfy a claim made against it for damages for breach of contract, out of the funds or property of such corporation. In citing the cases of *Guilford v. Supervisors of Chenango*, 13 N. Y. 143, and *People v. Supervisors of New York*, 11 Abb. 114, a distinction is drawn by which the cases are supposed to be reconciled with the one then under decision. "Those cases and many others," say the court, p. 455, "related not to the right or power of the legislature to compel an individual or corporation to pay a debt or claim, but to the power of the legislature to raise money by tax, and apply such money, when so raised, to the payment thereof. We could not, under the decisions of the courts on this point, made in these and other cases, now hold that the legislature had not authority to impose a tax to pay any claim, or to pay it out of the State treasury; and for this purpose to impose a tax upon the property of the State, or upon any portion of the State. This was fully settled in *People v. Mayor, &c. of Brooklyn*, 4 N. Y. 419; but neither that case nor the case in 13 N. Y. 143, in any manner gave a warrant for the opinion, that the legislature had a right to direct a municipal corporation to pay a claim for damages for breach of a contract, out of the funds or property of the corporation, without a submission of such claim to a judicial tribunal." If by this is meant that the legislature has power to compel a corporation to tax its citizens for the payment of a demand, but has not the authority to make it a charge against the corporation in any other

mode, the distinction seems to be one of form rather than of substance. It is no protection to the rights or property of a municipal corporation to hold that the legislature cannot determine upon a claim against it, if at the same time the corporation may be compelled by statute to assume and discharge the obligation through the levy of a tax for its satisfaction. But if it is only meant to declare that the legislature cannot adjudicate upon disputed claims, there can be no good reason to find fault with the decision. It is one thing to determine that the nature of a claim is such as to make it proper to satisfy it by taxation, and another to adjudge how much is justly due upon it. The one is the exercise of legislative power, the other of judicial. See *Sanborn v. Rice*, 9 Minn. 273; *Commonwealth v. Pittsburgh*, 34 Penn. St. 496; *Plimpton v. Somerset*, 33 Vt. 283; *Gage v. Graham*, 57 Ill. 144. But the power to decide upon the breach of a contract by a corporation, and the extent of the damages which have resulted, is less objectionable and less likely to lead to oppression, than the power to impose through taxation a claim upon a corporation which it never was concerned in creating, against which it protests, and which is unconnected with the ordinary functions and purposes of municipal government. In *Borough of Dunmore's Appeal*, 52 Penn. St. 374, a decision was made which seems to conflict with that in *People v. Hawes*, *supra*; and with the subsequent case of *Baldwin v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 42 Barb. 549. The Pennsylvania court decided that the constitutional guaranty of the right to jury trial had no application to municipal corporations, and a commission might be created by the

Having concisely stated these general views, we add merely, that * those cases which hold that the State may [* 234] raise bounty moneys by taxation, to be paid to persons in the military service, we think stand by themselves, and are supported by different principles from any which can fairly be summoned to the aid of some of the other cases which we have cited. The burden of the public defence unquestionably rests upon the whole community; and the legislature may properly provide for its apportionment and * discharge in [* 235] such manner as its wisdom may prescribe. But those cases which hold it competent for the legislature to give its consent to a municipal corporation engaging in works of public improvement outside its territorial limits, and becoming a stockholder in a private corporation, must be conceded on all hands to have gone to the very limit of constitutional power in this direction; and to hold that the legislature may go even further, and, under its power to control the taxation of the political divisions and organizations of the State, may *compel* them, without the consent of their citizens, to raise money for such or any other unusual purposes, or to contract debts therefor, seems to us to be introducing new principles into our system of local self-government, and to be sanctioning a centralization of power not within the contemplation of the makers of the American constitutions. We think where any such forced taxation is resisted by the municipal organization, it will be very difficult to defend it as a proper exercise of legislative authority in a government where power is distributed on the principles which prevail here.

Legislative Control of Corporate Property.

The legislative power of the State controls and disposes of the property of the State. How far it may also control and dispose of the property of those agencies of government which it has

legislature to adjust the demands between them. See also *In re Pennsylvania Hall*, 5 Penn. St. 204; *Layton v. New Orleans*, 12 La. Ann. 515. In *People v. Power*, 25 Ill. 187, it was held competent for the legislature to apportion the taxes collected in a county between a city therein and the remainder of the county, and that the county revenues "must necessarily be within the control of the legislature for political purposes." And see *Portwood v. Montgomery Co.*, 52 Miss. 523.

created and endowed with corporate powers is a question which happily there has been very little occasion to discuss in the courts. Being created as an agency of government, it is evident that the municipality cannot in itself have that complete and absolute control and power of disposition of its property which is possessed by natural persons and private corporations in respect to their several possessions. For it can hold and own property only for corporate purposes, and its powers are liable at any time to be so modified by legislation as to render the property no longer available. Moreover, the charter rights may be altogether taken away; and in that case the legislature has deprived the corporation of its property by depriving it of corporate capacity to hold it. And in many ways, while the corporation holds and enjoys property, the legislature must possess power to interfere with its control, at least incidentally; for the mere fact that the corpora-

tion possesses property cannot deprive the State of its [* 286] complete authority to mould and change * the corporate organization, and enlarge or diminish the powers which it possessed before. But whether the State can directly intervene and take away the corporate property, or convert it to other uses than those for which it was procured, or whether, on repealing a charter of incorporation, it can take to itself the corporate property, and dispose of it at its discretion, are different questions from any raised by the indirect and incidental interference referred to.

In the leading case, in which it was decided by the Supreme Court of the United States that a private charter of incorporation, granted by a State, was a contract between the State and the corporators, not subject to modification or repeal, except in pursuance of a right expressly reserved, but that the charter of a municipal corporation was not such a contract, it was at the same time declared, as the opinion of the judges, that the legislature could not deprive such municipal corporations of their vested rights in property. "It may be admitted," says one of the judges, "that corporations for mere public government, such as towns, cities, and counties, may in many respects be subject to legislative control. But it will hardly be contended, that even in respect to such corporations the legislative power is so transcendent that it may, at its will, take away the private property of the corporation, or change the uses of its private funds ac-

quired under the public faith. Can the legislature confiscate to its own use the private funds which a municipal corporation holds under its charter, without any default or consent of the corporators? If a municipal corporation be capable of holding devises and legacies to charitable uses, as many municipal corporations are, does the legislature, under our forms of limited government, possess the authority to seize upon those funds and appropriate them to other uses, at its own arbitrary pleasure, against the will of the donors and donees? From the very nature of our government, the public faith is pledged the other way, and that pledge constitutes a valid compact; and that compact is subject only to judicial inquiry, construction, and abrogation." ¹ "The government has no power to revoke a grant, even of its own funds, when given to a private person or corporation for special uses. It cannot recall its own endowments, granted to any hospital or college, or city or town, for the use of such corporations. * The only authority remaining to [* 237] the government is judicial, to ascertain the validity of the grant, to enforce its proper uses, to suppress frauds, and, if the uses are charitable, to secure their regular administration through the means of equitable tribunals, in cases where there would otherwise be a failure of justice." ²

"In respect to public corporations," says another judge, "which exist only for public purposes, such as towns, cities, &c., the legislature may, under proper limitations, change, modify, enlarge, or restrain them, securing, however, the property for the use of those for whom and at whose expense it was purchased." ³ These views had been acted upon by the same court in preceding cases.⁴ They draw a distinction between the political rights and privileges conferred on corporations and which are not vested rights in any sense implying constitutional permanency, and such rights in property as the corporation acquires, and which in the

¹ *Story, J., in Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 Wheat. 694, 695.

² *Story, J., in Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 Wheat. 698.

³ *Washington, J., Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 Wheat. 663.

⁴ *Terrett v. Taylor*, 9 Cranch, 43; *Town of Pawlet v. Clark*, 9 Cranch, 292. See also *State v. Haben*, 22 Wis. 660, referred to, *ante*, pp. *230-*231,

note; *Aberdeen v. Saunderson*, 16 Miss. 663. In *People v. Common Council of Detroit*, 28 Mich. 228, this subject was largely considered, and the court denied the right of the State to compel a municipal corporation to contract a debt for a mere local object; for example, a city park. Compare *People v. Board of Supervisors*, 50 Cal. 561.

view of these decisions are protected by the same reasons which shield similar rights in individuals.¹

When the municipal divisions of the territory of the State are changed in their boundaries, two or more consolidated in one, or one subdivided, it is conceded that the legislature possesses the power to make such disposition of the corporate property as natural equity would require in view of the altered condition of things. The fact that a portion of the citizens, before entitled to the benefits springing from the use of specific property for public purposes, will now be deprived of that benefit, cannot affect the validity of the legislative act, which is supposed in some other way to compensate them for the incidental loss.²

[* 238] And in many * other cases the legislature properly exercises a similar power of control in respect to the corporate property, and may direct its partition and appropriation, in order to accommodate most justly and effectually, in view of new circumstances, the purposes for which it was acquired.

The rule upon the subject we take to be this: when corporate powers are conferred, there is an implied compact between the State and the corporators that the property which they are given the capacity to acquire for corporate purposes under their charter shall not be taken from them and appropriated to other uses.³ If the State grants property to the corporation, the grant is an executed contract, which cannot be revoked. The rights acquired, either by such grants or by any other legitimate mode in

¹ "It is an unsound and even absurd proposition that political power conferred by the legislature can become a vested right, *as against the government*, in any individual or body of men. It is repugnant to the genius of our institutions, and the spirit and meaning of the Constitution; for by that fundamental law, all political rights not there defined and taken out of the exercise of legislative discretion were intended to be left subject to its regulation. If corporations can set up a vested right as against the government to the exercise of this species of power, because it has been conferred upon them by the bounty of the legislature, so may any and every officer under the government

do the same." *Nelson, J., in People v. Morris*, 13 Wend. 331. And see *Bristol v. New Chester*, 3 N. H. 532; *Benson v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 10 Barb. 244.

² *Bristol v. New Chester*, 3 N. H. 533. And see *ante*, pp. *232-*234, notes.

³ If land is dedicated as a public square, and accepted as such, a law devoting it to other uses is void, because violating the obligation of contracts. *Warren v. Lyons City*, 22 Iowa, 351. As there was no attempt in that case to appropriate the land to such other uses under the right of eminent domain, the question of the power to do so was not considered.

which such a corporation can acquire property, are vested rights, and cannot be taken away. Nevertheless if the corporate powers should be repealed, the corporate ownership would necessarily cease, and even when not repealed, a modification of those powers, or a change in corporate bounds, might seriously affect, if not altogether divest, the rights of individual corporators, so far as they can be said to have any rights in public property. And in other ways, incidentally as well as by direct intervention, the State may exercise authority and control over the disposition and use of corporate property, according to the legislative view of what is proper for the public interest and just to the corporators, subject only — as we think — to this restriction, that the purpose for which the property was originally acquired shall be kept in view, so far as the circumstances will admit, in any disposition that may be made of it.¹

¹ See *North Yarmouth v. Skillings*, 45 Me. 133. "That the State may make a contract with, or a grant to, a public municipal corporation, which it could not subsequently impair or resume, is not denied; but in such a case the corporation is to be regarded as a private company. A grant may be made to a public corporation for purposes of private advantage; and although the public may also derive a common benefit therefrom, yet the corporation stands on the same footing, as respects such grant, as would any body of persons upon whom like privileges were conferred. Public or municipal corporations, however, which exist only for public purposes, and possess no powers except such as are bestowed upon them for public political purposes, are subject at all times to the control of the legislature, which may alter, modify, or abolish them at pleasure." *Trumbull, J.*, in *Richland County v. Lawrence County*, 12 Ill. 8. "Public corporations are but parts of the machinery employed in carrying on the affairs of the State; and they are subject to be changed, modified, or destroyed, as the exigencies of the public may

demand. The State may exercise a general superintendence and control over them and their rights and effects, so that their property is not diverted from the uses and objects for which it was given or purchased." *Trustees of Schools v. Tatman*, 13 Ill. 30, per *Treat*, Ch. J. And see *Harrison v. Bridgeton*, 16 Mass. 16; *Montpelier v. East Montpelier*, 27 Vt. 704; *Same v. Same*, 29 Vt. 19; *Benson v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 10 Barb. 223. See also *City of Louisville v. University*, 15 B. Monr. 642; *Weymouth and Braintree Fire District v. County Commissioners*, 108 Mass. 142. In *State v. St. Louis County Court*, 34 Mo. 572, the following remarks are made by the court, in considering the cause shown by the county in answer to an application to compel it to meet a requisition for the police board of St. Louis: "As to the second cause shown in the return, it is understood to mean, not that there is in fact no money in the treasury to pay this requisition, but that as a matter of law all the money which is in the treasury was collected for specific purposes from which it cannot be diverted. The specific purposes for

[* 289] * This restriction is not the less applicable where corporate powers are abolished than it is in other cases ; and whatever might be the nature of the public property which the corporation had acquired, and whatever the purpose of the acquisition, the legislature, when by taking away the corporate authority it became vested with the control of the property, would be under obligation to dispose of it in such manner as to give the original corporators the benefit thereof by putting it to the use designed, if still practicable, or to some kindred or equally beneficial use having reference to the altered condition of things. The obligation is one which, from the very nature of the case, must rest for its enforcement in great measure upon

which the money was collected were those heretofore directed by the legislature ; and this act, being a later expression of the will of the legislature, controls the subject, and so far as it conflicts with previous acts repeals them. The county is not a private corporation, but an agency of the State government ; and though as a public corporation it holds property, such holding is subject to a large extent to the will of the legislature. Whilst the legislature cannot take away from a county its property, it has full power to direct the mode in which the property shall be used for the benefit of the county." For like views see *Palmer v. Fitts*, 51 Ala. 489, 492. Compare *People v. Mahaney*, 18 Mich. 433. In *Darlington v. New York*, 81 N. Y. 164, the complete control of the legislature over the corporate property of cities was asserted, and it was held competent to subject the city to liability for property destroyed by a riot. It will be observed that the strong expression of legislative power is generally to be found in cases where the thing actually done was clearly and unquestionably competent. In *Payne v. Treadwell*, 16 Cal. 233, this language is used : " The agents of the corporation can sell or dispose of the property of the corporation only in the way

and according to the order of the legislature ; and therefore the legislature may by law operating immediately upon the subject dispose of this property, or give effect to any previous disposition or attempted disposition. The property itself is a trust, and the legislature is the prime and controlling power, managing and directing the use, disposition, and direction of it." Quoted and approved in *San Francisco v. Canavan*, 42 Cal. 558. These strong and general expressions should be compared with what is said in *Grogan v. San Francisco*, 18 Cal. 590, in which the right of municipal corporations to constitutional protection in their property is asserted fully. The same right is asserted in *People v. Batchelor*, 53 N. Y. 128 ; *People v. Mayor, &c. of Chicago*, 51 Ill. 17 ; *People v. Tappan*, 29 Wis. 664 ; *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 Mich. 44 ; and very many others. See *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* § 39 *et seq.*, and cases referred to in notes. And see *Hewison v. New Haven*, 87 Conn. 483 ; *New Orleans, &c. R. R. Co. v. New Orleans*, 26 La. Ann. 517, as to the distinction between the public or governmental character of municipal corporations, and their private character as respects the ownership and management of their own property.

the legislative good faith and sense of justice; and it could only be in those cases where there had been a clear disregard of the rights of the original corporators, in the use attempted to be made of the property, that relief could be had through judicial action.

No such restriction, however, can rest upon the legislature in regard to the rights and privileges which the State grants to municipal corporations in the nature of franchises, and which are granted only as aids or conveniences to the municipality in effecting the purposes of its incorporation. These, like the corporate powers, must be understood to be granted during pleasure.¹

* *Towns and Counties.*

[* 240]

Thus far we have been considering general rules, applicable to all classes of municipal organizations possessed of corporate powers, and by which these powers may be measured, or the duties which they impose defined. In regard to some of these organizations, however, there are other and peculiar rules which require separate mention. Some of them are so feebly endowed with corporate life, and so much hampered, controlled, and directed in the exercise of the functions which are conferred upon them, that they are sometimes spoken of as nondescript in character, and as occupying a position somewhere between that of a corporation and a mere voluntary association of citizens.

¹ *East Hartford v. Hartford Bridge Co.*, 10 How. 535. On this subject, see ch. ix., *post*. The case of *Trustees of Aberdeen Academy v. Mayor, &c. of Aberdeen*, 13 S. & M. 645, appears to be *contra*. By the charter of the town of Aberdeen in 1837, the legislature granted to it the sole power to grant licenses to sell vinous and spirituous liquors within the corporate limits thereof, and to appropriate the money arising therefrom to city purposes. In 1848 an act was passed giving these moneys to the Aberdeen Female Academy. The act was held void, on the ground that the original grant was of a franchise

which constituted property, and it could not be transferred to another, though it might be repealed. The case cites *Bailey v. Mayor, &c.*, 3 Hill, 541, and *St. Louis v. Russell*, 9 Mo. 507, which seem to have little relevancy; also 4 Wheat. 663, 698, 699, and 2 Kent, 305, note, for the general rule protecting municipal corporations in their vested rights to property. The case of *Benson v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 10 Barb. 223, also holds the grant of a ferry franchise to a municipal corporation to be irrevocable, but the authorities generally will not sustain this view. See *post*, p. *283 and note.

Counties, townships, school districts, and road districts do not usually possess corporate powers under special charters; but they exist under general laws of the State, which apportion the territory of the State into political divisions for convenience of government, and require of the people residing within those divisions the performance of certain public duties as a part of the machinery of the State; and, in order that they may be able to perform these duties, vest them with certain corporate powers. Whether they shall assume those duties or exercise those powers, the people of the political divisions are not allowed the privilege of choice; the legislature assumes this division of the State to be essential in republican government, and the duties are imposed as a part of the proper and necessary burden which the citizens must bear in maintaining and perpetuating constitutional liberty.¹ Usually their functions are wholly of a public nature, and there is no room to imply any contract between them and the State, in their organization as corporate bodies, except that which springs from the ordinary rules of good faith, and which requires that the property they shall acquire, by local taxation or otherwise, for the purposes of their organization, shall not be [* 241] seized by the State, and appropriated *in other ways.

They are, therefore, sometimes called *quasi* corporations,² to distinguish them from the corporations in general, which possess more completely the functions of an artificial entity. Chief Justice *Parker*, of Massachusetts, in speaking of school districts, has said: "That they are not bodies politic and corporate, with the general powers of corporations, must be admitted; and the reasoning advanced to show their defect of power is conclusive. The same may be said of towns and other municipal societies; which, although recognized by various statutes, and by immemorial usage, as persons or aggregate corporations, with precise duties which may be enforced, and privileges which may be maintained by suits at law, yet are deficient in many of the

¹ *Granger v. Pulaski County*, 26 Ark. 37; *Scales v. Chattahoochee County*, 41 Geo. 225; *Palmer v. Fitts*, 51 Ala. 489.

² *Riddle v. Proprietors, &c.*, 7 Mass. 186, 187; *School District v. Wood*, 13 Mass. 192; *Adams v. Wiscasset Bank*, 1 Greenl. 361; *Denton v. Jackson*, 2

Johns. Ch. 325; *Beardsley v. Smith*, 16 Conn. 367; *Eastman v. Meredith*, 36 N. H. 296; *Hopple v. Brown*, 18 Ohio, n. s. 311; *Commissioners of Hamilton Co. v. Mighels*, 7 Ohio, n. s. 109; *Ray County v. Bentley*, 49 Mo. 236.

powers incident to the general character of corporations. They may be considered, under our institutions, as *quasi* corporations, with limited powers, coextensive with the duties imposed upon them by statute or usage, but restrained from the general use of authority which belongs to these metaphysical persons by the common law. The same may be said of all the numerous corporations which have been from time to time created by various acts of the legislature; all of them enjoying the power which is expressly bestowed upon them, and perhaps, in all instances where the act is silent, possessing, by necessary implication, the authority which is requisite to execute the purposes of their creation.” “It will not do to apply the strict principles of law respecting corporations in all cases to these aggregate bodies which are created by statute in this Commonwealth. By the several statutes which have been passed respecting school districts, it is manifest that the legislature has supposed that a division of towns, for the purpose of maintaining schools, will promote the important object of general education; and this valuable object of legislative care seems to require, in construing their acts, that a liberal view should be had to the end to be effected.”¹ Following out this view, the courts of the New England States have held, that when judgments are recovered against towns, parishes, and school districts, any of the property of private owners within * the municipal divi- [* 242] sion is liable to be taken for their discharge. The reasons for this doctrine, and the custom upon which it is founded, are thus stated by the Supreme Court of Connecticut:—

“We know that the relation in which the members of municipal corporations in this State have been supposed to stand, in respect to the corporation itself, as well as to its creditors, has elsewhere been considered in some respects peculiar. We have treated them, for some purposes, as parties to corporate proceedings, and their individuality has not been considered as merged in their corporate connection. Though corporators, they have been holden to be parties to suits by or against the corporation, and individually liable for its debts. Heretofore this has not been doubted as to the inhabitants of towns, located ecclesiastical societies, and school districts.

“From a recurrence to a history of the law on this subject, we

¹ School District v. Wood, 13 Mass. 192.

are persuaded that the principle and usage here recognized and followed, in regard to the liability of the inhabitants of towns and communities, were very early adopted by our ancestors. And whether they were considered as a part of the common law of England, or originated here, as necessary to our state of society, it is not very material to inquire. We think, however, that the principle is not of domestic origin, but to some extent was operative and applied in the mother country, especially in cases where a statute fixed a liability upon a municipality which had no corporate funds. The same reason and necessity for the application of such a principle and practice existed in both countries. Such corporations are of a public and political character; they exercise a portion of the governing power of the State. Statutes impose upon them important public duties. In the performance of these, they must contract debts and liabilities, which can only be discharged by a resort to individuals, either by taxation or execution. Taxation, in most cases, can only be the result of the voluntary action of the corporation, dependent upon the contingent will of the majority of the corporators, and upon their tardy and uncertain action. It affords no security to creditors, because they have no power over it. Such reasons as these probably operated with our ancestors in adopting the more efficient and certain remedy by execution, which has been resorted to in the present case, and which they had seen to some extent in operation in the country whose laws were their inheritance.

[* 243] * “The plaintiff would apply to these municipal or *quasi* corporations the close principles applicable to private corporations. But inasmuch as they are not, strictly speaking, corporations, but only municipal bodies, without pecuniary funds, it will not do to apply to them literally, and in all cases, the law of corporations.¹

“The individual liability of the members of *quasi* corporations, though not expressly adjudged, was very distinctly recognized in the case of *Russell v. The Men of Devon*.² It was alluded to as a known principle in the case of the *Attorney-General v. The City of Exeter*,³ applicable as well to cities as to hundreds and parishes. That the rated inhabitants of an English parish are considered as the real parties to suits against the parish is now

¹ *School District v. Wood*, 13 Mass. 192.

² 2 Term Rep. 660.

³ 2 Russ. 45.

supposed to be well settled; and so it was decided in the case of *The King v. The Inhabitants of Woburn*,¹ and *The King v. The Inhabitants of Hardwick*.² And, in support of this principle, reference was made to the form of the proceedings; as that they are entitled 'against the inhabitants,' &c.

"In the State of Massachusetts, from whose early institutions we have borrowed many valuable specimens, the individual responsibility of the inhabitants of towns for town debts has long been established. Distinguished counsel in the case of the *Merchants' Bank v. Cook*,³ referring to municipal bodies, say: 'For a century past the practical construction of the bar has been that, in an action by or against a corporation, a member of the corporation is a party in the suit.' In several other cases in that State the same principle is repeated. In the case of *Riddle v. The Proprietors of the Locks and Canals on Merrimack River*,⁴ *Parsons*, Ch. J., in an allusion to this private responsibility of corporators, remarks: 'And the sound reason is, that having no corporate fund, and no legal means of obtaining one, each corporator is liable to satisfy any judgment obtained against the corporation.' So in *Brewer v. Inhabitants of New Gloucester*,⁵ the court say: 'As the law provides that, when judgment is recovered against the inhabitants of a town, execution may be levied upon the property of any inhabitant, each inhabitant must be considered as a party.' In the case before referred to of the *Merchants' Bank v. Cook*, **Parker*, Ch. J., ex- [* 244] presses the opinion of the court upon this point thus: 'Towns, parishes, precincts, &c., are but a collection of individuals, with certain corporate powers for political and civil purposes, without any corporate fund, from which a judgment can be satisfied; but each member of the community is liable, in his person and estate, to the execution which may issue against the body; each individual, therefore, may be well thought to be a party to a suit brought against them by their collective name. In regard to banks, turnpikes, and other corporations, the case is different.' The counsel concerned in the case of *Mower v. Leicester*,⁶ without contradiction, speak of this practice of subjecting individuals as one of daily occurrence. The law on this subject was very much considered in the case of *Chase v. The*

¹ 10 East, 395.

² 11 East, 577.

³ 4 Pick. 405.

⁴ 7 Mass. 187.

⁵ 14 Mass. 216.

⁶ 9 Mass. 247.

Merrimack Bank,¹ and was applied and enforced against the members of a territorial parish. ‘The question is,’ say the court, ‘whether, on an execution against a town or parish, the body or estate of any inhabitant may be lawfully taken to satisfy it. This question seems to have been settled in the affirmative by a series of decisions, and ought no longer to be considered as an open question.’ The State of Maine, when separated from Massachusetts, retained most of its laws and usages, as they had been recognized in the parent State; and, among others, the one in question. In *Adams v. Wiscasset Bank*,² *Mellen*, Ch. J., says: ‘It is well known that all judgments against *quasi* corporations may be satisfied out of the property of any individual inhabitant.’

“The courts of this State, from a time beyond the memory of any living lawyer, have sanctioned and carried out this usage, as one of common-law obligation; and it has been applied, not to towns only, but also, by legal analogy, to territorial ecclesiastical societies and school districts. The forms of our process against these communities have always corresponded with this view of the law. The writs have issued against the *inhabitants* of towns, societies, and districts *as parties*. As early in the history of our jurisprudence as 1805, a statute was enacted authorizing communities, such as towns, societies, &c., to prosecute and defend suits, and for this purpose to appear, either by *themselves*, agents, or attorneys. If the inhabitants were not then considered as parties individually, and liable to the consequences of judgments against such communities as parties, there would have [* 245] been a glaring *impropriety in permitting them to appear and defend by themselves; but, if parties, such a right was necessary and indispensable. Of course this privilege has been and may be exercised.³

“Our statute providing for the collection of taxes enacts that the treasurer of the State shall direct his warrant to the collectors of the State tax in the several towns. If neither this nor the further proceedings against the collectors and the selectmen authorized by the statute shall enforce the collection of the tax, the law directs that then the treasurer shall issue his execution against the inhabitants of such town. Such an execution may be levied upon the estate of the inhabitants; and this provision of the law was not considered as introducing a new principle, or

¹ 19 Pick. 564.

² 1 Greenl. 361.

³ 1 Swift's System, 227.

enforcing a novel remedy, but as being only in conformity with the well-known usage in other cases. The levy of an execution under this statute produced the case of *Beers v. Botsford*.¹ There the execution, which had been issued against the town of Newtown by the treasurer of the State, had been levied upon the property of the plaintiff, an inhabitant of that town, and he had thus been compelled to pay the balance of a State tax due from the town. He sued the town of Newtown for the recovery of the money so paid by him. The most distinguished professional gentlemen in the State were engaged as counsel in that case; and it did not occur, either to them or to the court, that the plaintiff's property had been taken without right: on the contrary, the case proceeded throughout on the conceded principle of our common law, that the levy was properly made upon the estate of the plaintiff. And without this the plaintiff could not have recovered of the town, but must have resorted to his action against the officer for his illegal and void levy. In *Fuller v. Hampton*,² *Peters, J.*, remarked that, if costs are recovered against a town, the writ of execution to collect them must have been issued against the property of the inhabitants of the town; and this is the invariable practice. The case of *Atwater v. Woodbridge*³ also grew out of this ancient usage. The ecclesiastical society of Bethany had been taxed by the town of Woodbridge for its moneys at interest, and the warrant for the collection of the tax had been levied upon the property of the plaintiff, and the tax had thus been collected of him, who was an inhabitant of the located society of Bethany. *Brainerd, J.*, who drew up the * opinion of the court, referring to this proceeding, said: 'This practice, with regard to towns, has prevailed in New England, so far as I have been able to investigate the subject, from an early period, — from its first settlement, — a practice brought by our forefathers from England, which had there obtained in corporations similar to the towns incorporated in New England.' It will here be seen that the principle is considered as applicable to territorial societies as to towns, because the object to be obtained was the same in both, — 'that the town or society should be brought to a sense of duty, and make provision for payment and indemnity;' a very good reason, and very applicable to the case we are considering.

¹ 3 Day, 159.² 5 Conn. 417.³ 6 Conn. 223.

“The law on this subject was more distinctly brought out and considered by this court in the late case of *McCloud v. Selby*,¹ in which this well-known practice, as it had been applied to towns and ecclesiastical societies, was extended and sanctioned as to school districts; ‘else it would be breaking in upon the analogies of the law.’ ‘They are communities for different purposes, but essentially of the same character.’ And no doubt can remain, since the decision of this case, but that the real principle, in all of the cases on this subject, has been, and is, that the inhabitants of *quasi* corporations are parties individually, as well as in their corporate capacities, to all the actions in which the corporation is a party. And to the same effect is the language of the elementary writers.”²

So far as this rule rests upon the reason that these organizations have no common fund, and that no other mode exists by which demands against them can be enforced, it cannot be considered applicable in those States where express provision is made by law for compulsory taxation to satisfy any judgment recovered against the corporate body, — the duty of levying the tax being imposed upon some officer, who may be compelled by *mandamus* to perform it. Nor has any usage, so far as we are aware, grown

up in any of the newer States, like that which had so [* 247] early an origin in New England. * More just, convenient, and inexpensive modes of enforcing such demands have been established by statute, and the rules concerning them are conformed more closely to those which are established for other corporations.

On the other hand, it is settled that these corporations are not liable to a private action, at the suit of a party injured by a neglect of its officers to perform a corporate duty, unless such action is given by statute. This doctrine has been frequently applied where suits have been brought against towns, or the highway officers of towns, to recover for damages sustained in consequence of defects in the public ways. The common law gives no such

¹ 10 Conn. 390–395.

² *Beardsley v. Smith*, 16 Conn. 375, citing 2 Kent, 221; Angell & Ames on Corp. 374; 1 Swift's Dig. 72, 794; 5 Dane's Abr. 158. And see *Dillon, Mun. Corp. c. 1*. It was held competent in the above case to

extend the same principle to incorporated cities; and an act of the legislature permitting the enforcement of city debts in the same mode was sustained. For a more recent case in Massachusetts than these cited, see *Gaskill v. Dudley*, 6 Met. 551.

action, and it is therefore not sustainable at all, unless given by statute.¹ A distinction is made between those corporations which are created as exceptions, and receive special grants of power for the peculiar convenience and benefit of the corporators, on the one hand, and the incorporated inhabitants of a district, who are by statute invested with particular powers, without their consent, on the other. In the latter case, the State may impose corporate duties, and compel their performance, under penalties; but the corporators, who are made such whether they will or no, cannot be considered in the light of persons who have voluntarily, and for a consideration, assumed obligations, so as to owe a duty to every person interested in the performance.²

The reason which exempts these public bodies from liability to private actions, based upon neglect to perform public obligations, does not apply to villages, boroughs, and cities, which accept special *charters from the State. The [* 248] grant of the corporate franchise, in these cases, is usually

¹ This rule, however, has no application to the case of neglect to perform those obligations which are incurred by the political subdivisions of the State when special duties are imposed on them by law. *Hannon v. St. Louis Co. Court*, 62 Mo. 313.

² *Mower v. Leicester*, 9 Mass. 250; *Bartlett v. Crozier*, 17 Johns. 439; *Farnum v. Concord*, 2 N. H. 392; *Adams v. Wiscasset Bank*, 1 Me. 361; *Baxter v. Winooski Turnpike*, 22 Vt. 123; *Beardsley v. Smith*, 16 Conn. 375; *Chidsey v. Canton*, 17 Conn. 475; *Young v. Commissioners, &c.*, 2 N. & McC. 537; *Commissioners of Highways v. Martin*, 4 Mich. 557; *Morey v. Newfane*, 8 Barb. 645; *Lorillard v. Monroe*, 11 N. Y. 392; *Galen v. Clyde and Rose Plank Road Co.*, 27 Barb. 543; *Reardon v. St. Louis*, 36 Mo. 555; *Sherburne v. Yuba Co.*, 21 Cal. 113; *State v. County of Hudson*, 30 N. J. 137; *Hedges v. Madison Co.*, 1 Gilm. 567; *Granger v. Pulaski Co.*, 26 Ark. 37; *Weightman v. Washington*, 1 Black, 39; *Ball v. Winchester*, 32 N. H. 443; *Eastman v. Meredith*, 36 N. H. 284; *Waltham v.*

Kemper, 55 Ill. 346; *Sutton v. Board*, 41 Miss. 236; *Cooley v. Freeholders*, 27 N. J. 415; *Bigelow v. Randolph*, 14 Gray, 541; *Symonds v. Clay Co.*, 71 Ill. 355; *People v. Young*, 72 Ill. 411. These cases follow the leading English case of *Russell v. Men of Devon*, 2 T. R. 667. In the very carefully considered case of *Eastman v. Meredith*, 36 N. H. 284, it was decided, on the principle above stated, that if a building erected by a town for a town-house is so imperfectly constructed that the flooring gives way at the annual town-meeting, and an inhabitant and legal voter, in attendance on the meeting, receives thereby a bodily injury, he cannot maintain an action against the town to recover damages for this injury. The case is carefully distinguished from those where corporations have been held liable for the negligent use of their own property by means of which others are injured. The familiar maxim that one shall so use his own as not to injure that which belongs to another is of general application.

made only at the request of the citizens to be incorporated, and it is justly assumed that it confers what to them is a valuable privilege. This privilege is a consideration for the duties which the charter imposes. Larger powers of self-government are given than are confided to towns or counties; larger privileges in the acquisition and control of corporate property; and special authority is conferred to make use of the public highways for the special and peculiar convenience of the citizens of the municipality in various modes not permissible elsewhere. The grant by the State to the municipality of a portion of its sovereign powers, and their acceptance for these beneficial purposes, is regarded as raising an implied promise, on the part of the corporation, to perform the corporate duties, and as imposing the duty of performance, not for the benefit of the State merely, but for the benefit of every individual interested in its performance.¹

¹ *Selden*, J., in *Weet v. Brockport*, 16 N. Y. 161, note. See also *Mayor of Lyme v. Turner*, Cowp. 86; *Henley v. Lyme Regis*, 5 Bing. 91; Same case in error, 8 B. & Adol. 77, and 1 Bing. N. C. 222; *Mayor, &c. of New York v. Furze*, 3 Hill, 612; *Rochester White Lead Co. v. Rochester*, 3 N. Y. 464; *Hutson v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 9 N. Y. 163; *Conrad v. Ithaca*, 16 N. Y. 158; *Mills v. Brooklyn*, 32 N. Y. 489; *Barton v. Syracuse*, 36 N. Y. 54; *Lee v. Sandy Hill*, 40 N. Y. 442; *Clark v. Washington*, 12 Wheat. 40; *Riddle v. Proprietors of Locks, &c.*, 7 Mass. 183; *Bigelow v. Inhabitants of Randolph*, 14 Gray, 541; *Mears v. Commissioners of Wilmington*, 9 Ired. 73; *Browning v. Springfield*, 17 Ill. 143; *Bloomington v. Bay*, 42 Ill. 503; *Springfield v. LeClaire*, 49 Ill. 476; *Peru v. French*, 55 Ill. 318; *Pittsburg v. Grier*, 22 Penn. St. 54; *Jones v. New Haven*, 34 Conn. 1; *Stackhouse v. Lafayette*, 26 Ind. 17; *Brinkmeyer v. Evansville*, 29 Ind. 187; *Sawyer v. Corse*, 17 Grat. 241; *Richmond v. Long*, 17 Grat. 375; *Blake v. St. Louis*, 40 Mo. 569; *Scott v. Mayor, &c. of Manchester*, 37 Eng. L. & Eq. 495; *Smoot v.*

Wetumpka, 24 Ala. 112; *Detroit v. Corey*, 9 Mich. 165; *Rusch v. Davenport*, 6 Iowa, 443; *Commissioners v. Duckett*, 20 Md. 468; *Covington v. Bryant*, 7 Bush, 248; *Weightman v. Washington*, 1 Black, 41; *Chicago v. Robbins*, 2 Black, 418; *Nebraska v. Campbell*, 2 Black, 590. In the recent case of *Detroit v. Blackeby*, 21 Mich. 84, this whole subject is considered at length; and the court (one judge dissenting) deny the soundness of the principle stated in the text, and hold that municipal corporations existing under special charters are not liable to individuals for injuries caused by neglect to perform corporate duties, unless expressly made so by statute. This case is referred to and dissented from in *Waltham v. Kemper*, 55 Ill. 347. In *Murtaugh v. St. Louis*, 44 Mo. 480, *Currier, J.*, says: "The general result of the adjudications seems to be this: When the officer or servant of a municipal corporation is in the exercise of a power conferred upon the corporation for its private benefit, and injury ensues from the negligence or misfeasance of such officer or servant, the corporation is liable, as in the case of private corpo-

In this respect these corporations are looked upon as occupying the same position as private corporations, which, having accepted a valuable franchise, on condition of the performance of certain public duties, are held by the acceptance to contract for the performance of those duties. In the case of public corporations, however, the liability is contingent on the law affording the means of performing the duty, which, in some cases, by reason of restrictions upon the power of taxation, they might not possess. But assuming the corporation to be clothed with sufficient power by the charter to that end, the liability of a city or village, vested with control of its streets, for any neglect to keep them in repair, or for any improper construction, has been determined in many cases.¹ And a similar liability would exist in other cases where the same reasons would be applicable.

* But if the ground of the action is the omission by [* 249]

rations or parties; but when the acts or omissions complained of were done or omitted in the exercise of a corporate franchise conferred upon the corporation for the public good, and not for the private corporate advantage, then the corporation is not liable for the consequences of such acts or omissions." Citing *Bailey v. New York*, 3 Hill, 531; *Martin v. Brooklyn*, 1 Hill, 550; *Richmond v. Long's Adm'r*, 17 Grat. 375; *Sherburne v. Yuba Co.*, 21 Cal. 113; *Dargan v. Mobile*, 31 Ala. 469; *Stewart v. New Orleans*, 9 La. Ann. 461; *Prother v. Lexington*, 13 B. Monr. 559. And as to exemption from liability in the exercise or failure to exercise legislative authority, see *ante*, p. *208 and note. As to who are to be regarded as municipal officers, see *Maximilian v. New York*, 62 N. Y. 160; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 468, and cases there cited.

¹ *Weet v. Brockport*, 16 N. Y. 161, note; *Hickok v. Plattsburg*, 16 N. Y. 158; *Morey v. Newfane*, 8 Barb. 645; *Browning v. Springfield*, 17 Ill. 143; *Hyatt v. Rondout*, 44 Barb. 385; *Lloyd v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 5 N. Y. 369; *Rusch v. Davenport*, 6 Iowa, 433. And see *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* c. 18, and the cases cited in the

preceding note. The cases of *Weet v. Brockport*, and *Hickok v. Plattsburg*, were criticised by Mr. Justice *Marvin*, in the case of *Peck v. Batavia*, 32 Barb. 634, where, as well as in *Cole v. Medina*, 27 Barb. 218, he held that a village merely *authorized* to make and repair sidewalks, but not in terms absolutely and imperatively required to do so, had a discretion conferred upon it in respect to such walks, and was not responsible for a refusal to enact ordinances or by-laws in relation thereto; nor, if it enacted such ordinances or by-laws was it liable for damages arising from a neglect to enforce them. The doctrine that a power thus conferred is discretionary does not seem consistent with the ruling in some of the other cases cited, and is criticised in *Hyatt v. Rondout*, 44 Barb. 392. But see *ante*, p. *208 and note. Calling public meetings for political or philanthropic purposes is no part of the business of a municipal corporation, and it is not liable to one who, in lawfully passing by where the meeting is held, is injured by the discharge of a cannon fired by persons concerned in the meeting. *Boyland v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 1 Sandf. 27.

the corporation to repair a defect, it would seem that notice of the defect should be brought home to the corporation, or to officers charged with some duty respecting the streets, or that facts should appear sufficient to show that, by proper vigilance, it must have been known.¹ On the other hand, if the injury has happened in consequence of defective construction, notice is not essential, as the facts must be supposed to have been known from the first.²

In regard to all those powers which are conferred upon the corporation, not for the benefit of the general public, but of the corporators, — such as the power to construct works to supply a city with water, or gas-works, or sewers, and the like, — the corporation is held to a still more strict liability, and is made to respond in damages to the parties injured by the negligent manner in which the work is constructed, or guarded, even though, under its charter, the agents for the construction are not chosen or controlled by the corporation, and even where the work is required by law to be let to the lowest responsible bidder.

In *Bailey v. Mayor, &c. of New York*,³ an action was brought against the city by one who had been injured in his property by the careless construction of the Croton dam for the purpose of supplying the city with water. The work was constructed under the control of water commissioners, in whose appointment the city had no voice; and upon this ground, among others, and also on the ground that the city officers were acting in a public capacity, and, like other public agents, not responsible [* 250] for the misconduct of * those necessarily appointed by them, it was insisted the city could not be held liable. *Nelson*, Ch. J., examining the position that, “admitting the water commissioners to be the appointed agents of the defendants, still the latter are not liable, inasmuch as they were acting solely for the State in prosecuting the work in question, and therefore are not responsible for the conduct of those necessarily employed by

¹ *Hart v. Brooklyn*, 36 Barb. 226; *Y.* 639; *Springfield v. Doyle*, 76 Ill. 202; *Rosenburg v. Des Moines*, 41 Iowa, 415.
² *Alexander v. Mt. Sterling*, 71 Ill. 366.
³ 3 Hill, 531; *s. c.* in error, 2 Denio, 433.
Dewey v. City of Detroit, 15 Mich. 309; *Garrison v. New York*, 5 Bosw. 497; *McGinity v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 5 Duer, 674; *Decatur v. Fisher*, 53 Ill. 407; *Chicago v. McCarthy*, 75 Ill. 602; *Requa v. Rochester*, 45 N. Y. 129; *Hume v. New York*, 47 N.

them for that purpose," says: "We admit, if the defendants are to be regarded as occupying this relation, and are not chargeable with any want of diligence in the selection of agents, the conclusion contended for would seem to follow. They would then be entitled to all the immunities of public officers charged with a duty which, from its nature, could not be executed, without availing themselves of the services of others; and the doctrine of *respondeat superior* does not apply to such cases. If a public officer authorize the doing of an act not within the scope of his authority, or if he be guilty of negligence in the discharge of duties to be performed by himself, he will be held responsible; but not for the misconduct or malfeasance of such persons as he is obliged to employ. But this view cannot be maintained on the facts before us. The powers conferred by the several acts of the legislature, authorizing the execution of this great work, are not, strictly and legally speaking, conferred for the benefit of the public; the grant is a special, private franchise, made as well for the private emolument and advantage of the city as for public good. The State, in its sovereign character, has no interest in it. It owns no part of the work. The whole investment, under the law, and the revenue and profits to be derived therefrom, are a part of the private property of the city, as much so as the lands and houses belonging to it situate within its corporate limits.

"The argument of the defendants' counsel confounds the powers in question with those belonging to the defendants in their character as a municipal or public body,—such as are granted exclusively for public purposes to counties, cities, towns, and villages, where the corporations have, if I may so speak, no private estate or interest in the grant.

"As the powers in question have been conferred upon one of these public corporations, thus blending, in a measure, those conferred for private advantage and emolument with those already possessed for public purposes, there is some difficulty, I * admit, in separating them in the mind, and properly [* 251] distinguishing the one class from the other, so as to distribute the responsibility attaching to the exercise of each.

"But the distinction is quite clear and well settled, and the process of separation practicable. To this end, regard should be had, not so much to the nature and character of the various powers conferred, as to the object and purpose of the legislature

in conferring them. If granted for public purposes exclusively, they belong to the corporate body in its public, political, or municipal character. But, if the grant was for purposes of private advantage and emolument, though the public may derive a common benefit therefrom, the corporation *quo ad hoc* is to be regarded as a private company. It stands on the same footing as would any individual or body of persons upon whom the like special franchises had been conferred.¹

“Suppose the legislature, instead of the franchise in question, had conferred upon the defendants banking powers, or a charter for a railroad leading into the city, in the usual manner in which such powers are conferred upon private companies, could it be doubted that they would hold them in the same character, and be subject to the same duties and liabilities? It cannot be doubted but they would. These powers, in the eye of the law, would be entirely distinct and separate from those appertaining to the defendants as a municipal body. So far as related to the charter thus conferred, they would be regarded as a private company, and be subject to the responsibilities attaching to that class of institutions. The distinction is well stated by the Master of the Rolls, in *Moodalay v. East India Co.*,² in answer to an objection made by counsel. There the plaintiff had taken a lease from the company, granting him permission to supply the inhabitants of Madras with tobacco for ten years. Before the expiration of that period, the company dispossessed him, and granted the privilege to another. The plaintiff, preparatory to bringing an action against the company, filed a bill of discovery.

[* 252] One of the objections *taken by the defendant was, that the removal of the plaintiff was incident to their

¹ Citing *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 Wheat. 668, 672; *Phillips v. Bury*, 1 *Ld. Raym.* 8; 2 *T. R.* 352, s. c.; *Allen v. McKeen*, 1 *Sunn.* 297; *People v. Morris*, 13 *Wend.* 331-338; 2 *Kent's Com.* 275 (4th ed.); *United States Bank v. Planters' Bank*, 9 *Wheat.* 907; *Clark v. Corp. of Washington*, 12 *Wheat.* 40; *Moodalay v. East India Co.*, 1 *Brown's Ch. R.* 469. See, in addition to the cases cited by the court, *Touchard v. Touchard*, 5 *Cal.* 307;

Gas Co. v. San Francisco, 9 *Cal.* 453; *Richmond v. Long*, 17 *Grat.* 375; *Atkins v. Randolph*, 31 *Vt.* 226; *Small v. Danville*, 51 *Me.* 359; *Oliver v. Worcester*, 102 *Mass.* 489; *Philadelphia v. Fox*, 64 *Penn. St.* 180; *Detroit v. Corey*, 9 *Mich.* 165; *People v. Hurlbut*, 24 *Mich.* 44; *Western College v. Cleveland*, 12 *Ohio, n. s.* 375; *Hewison v. New Haven*, 37 *Conn.* 475; *People v. Batchellor*, 53 *N. Y.* 128.

² 1 *Brown's Ch. R.* 469.

character as a sovereign power, the exercise of which could not be questioned in a bill or suit at law. The Master of the Rolls admitted that no suit would lie against a sovereign power for any thing done in that capacity; but he denied that the defendants came within the rule. 'They have rights,' he observed, 'as a sovereign power; they have also duties as individuals; if they enter into bonds in India, the sums secured may be recovered here. So in this case, as a private company, they have entered into a private contract, to which they must be liable.' It is upon the like distinction that municipal corporations, in their private character as owners and occupiers of lands and houses, are regarded in the same light as individual owners and occupiers, and dealt with accordingly. As such, they are bound to repair bridges, highways, and churches; are liable to poor rates; and, in a word, to the discharge of any other duty or obligation to which an individual owner would be subject."¹

In *Storrs v. City of Utica*,² it was held that a city, owing to the public the duty of keeping its streets in a safe condition for travel, was liable to persons receiving injury from the neglect to keep proper lights and guards at night around an excavation which had been made for the construction of a sewer, notwithstanding it had contracted for all proper precautions with the persons executing the work. And in the *City of Detroit v. Corey*³ the corporation was held liable in a similar case, notwithstanding the work was required by the charter to be let to the lowest bidder. *Manning, J.*, in speaking to the point whether the cor-

¹ 2 Inst. 703; *Thursfield v. Jones*, Sir T. Jones, 187; *Rex v. Gardner*, Cowp. 79; *Mayor of Lyme v. Turner*, Cowp. 87; *Henley v. Mayor of Lyme*, 5 Bing. 91; 1 Bing. N. C. 222, s. c. in House of Lords. See also *Lloyd v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 5 N. Y. 369; *Commissioners v. Duckett*, 20 Md. 468. "The corporation of the city of New York possesses two kinds of powers,—one governmental and public, and, to the extent they are held and exercised, is clothed with sovereignty; the other private, and, to the extent they are held and exercised, is a legal individual. The former are given and used for public

purposes, the latter for private purposes. While in the exercise of the former, the corporation is a municipal government, and while in the exercise of the latter is a corporate, legal individual." Ibid. per *Foot, J.* See upon this point also *Western Fund Savings Society v. Philadelphia*, 31 Penn. St. 175; *Louisville v. Commonwealth*, 1 Duvall, 295; *People v. Common Council of Detroit*, 28 Mich. 228; *ante*, p. *230 and note.

² 17 N. Y. 104.

³ 9 Mich. 165. Compare *Mills v. Brooklyn*, 32 N. Y. 489; *Jones v. New Haven*, 34 Conn. 1.

tractors were to be considered as the agents of the city, so that the maxim *respondeat superior* should apply, says: "It is [* 253] to be observed that the * power under which they acted, and which made that lawful which would otherwise have been unlawful, was not a power given to the city for governmental purposes, or a public municipal duty imposed on the city, as to keep its streets in repair, or the like, but a special legislative grant to the city for private purposes. The sewers of the city, like its works for supplying the city with water, are the private property of the city; they belong to the city. The corporation and its corporators, the citizens, are alone interested in them; the outside public or people of the State at large have no interest in them, as they have in the streets of the city, which are public highways.

"The donee of such a power, whether the donee be an individual or a corporation, takes it with the understanding—for such are the requirements of the law in the execution of the power—that it shall be so executed as not unnecessarily to interfere with the rights of the public, and that all needful and proper measures will be taken, in the execution of it, to guard against accidents to persons lawfully using the highway at the time. He is individually bound for the performance of these obligations; he cannot accept the power divested of them, or rid himself of their performance by executing them through a third person as his agent. He may stipulate with the contractor for their performance, as was done by the city in the present case, but he cannot thereby relieve himself of his personal liability, or compel an injured party to look to his agent, instead of himself, for damages." And in answer to the objection that the contract was let to the lowest bidder, as the law required, it is shown that the provision of law to that effect was introduced for the benefit of the city, to protect it against frauds, and that it should not, therefore, relieve it from any liability.¹

¹ See also *Rochester White Lead Co. v. City of Rochester*, 3 N. Y. 463; *Grant v. City of Brooklyn*, 41 Barb. 381; *City of Buffalo v. Holloway*, 14 Barb. 101, and 7 N. Y. 493; *Lloyd v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 5 N. Y. 369; *Delmonico v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 1 Sandf. 222; *Barton v. Syracuse*, 37 Barb. 292; *Storrs v. Utica*, 17 N. Y. 104; *Springfield v. LeClaire*, 49 Ill. 476; *Blake v. St. Louis*, 40 Mo. 569; *Baltimore v. Pendleton*, 15 Md. 12; *St. Paul v. Leitz*, 3 Minn. 297; also numerous cases collected and classified in *Dillon on Municipal Corporations*. A mu-

* We have not deemed it important, in considering [* 254] the subject embraced within this chapter, to discuss the various questions which might be suggested in regard to the validity of the proceedings by which it is assumed in any case that a municipal corporation has become constituted. These ques-

nicipal corporation is not liable for neglect to devise and construct a proper system of drainage. *Carr v. Northern Liberties*, 35 Penn. St. 324. See *ante*, p. *208 and note. Cities are not liable for the illegal conduct of officials in the discharge of duty. *Dillon*, §§ 774-778, and cases cited; *Grumbine v. Washington*, 2 McArthur, 578.

The following are some of the more recent cases in which the liability of municipal corporations for neglect of public duties has been considered:—

For nuisance in highway, sewer, &c.: *Todd v. Troy*, 61 N. Y. 506; *Masterton v. Mt. Vernon*, 58 N. Y. 391; *Merrifield v. Worcester*, 110 Mass. 216; s. c. 14 Am. Rep. 592; *Woodward v. Worcester*, 121 Mass. 245; *Chicago v. Brophy*, 79 Ill. 277; *Chicago v. O'Brennan*, 65 Ill. 160. For invasion of private right or property: *Sheldon v. Kalamazoo*, 24 Mich. 383; *Babcock v. Buffalo*, 56 N. Y. 268; *Lee v. Sandy Hill*, 40 N. Y. 442; *Phinizy v. Augusta*, 47 Geo. 260; *Helena v. Thompson*, 29 Ark. 569; *Kobs v. Minneapolis*, 22 Minn. 159. For negligent construction of sewers: *Nims v. Troy*, 59 N. Y. 500; *Van Pelt v. Davenport*, 42 Iowa, 308; *Rowe v. Portsmouth*, 56 N. H. 291; *Ashley v. Port Huron*, 35 Mich. 296; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 628, note. For negligence in construction and improvement of streets: *Pekin v. Winkel*, 77 Ill. 56; *Bloomington v. Brokaw*, 77 Ill. 194; *Pekin v. Brereton*, 67 Ill. 477; *Chicago v. Langlass*, 66 Ill. 361; *Mead v. Derby*, 40 Conn. 205; *Milledgeville v. Cooley*, 55 Geo. 17; *Prentiss v. Boston*, 112 Mass. 43;

Saltmarsh v. Bow, 56 N. H. 428; *Sewall v. St. Paul*, 20 Minn. 511; *Kentworthy v. Ironton*, 41 Wis. 647; *Hoyt v. Hudson*, 41 Wis. 105. For defective sidewalk: *Springfield v. Doyle*, 76 Ill. 202; *Champaign v. Pattison*, 50 Ill. 62; *Townsend v. Des Moines*, 42 Iowa, 657; *Rice v. Des Moines*, 40 Iowa, 638; *McAuley v. Boston*, 113 Mass. 503; *Harriman v. Boston*, 114 Mass. 241; *Morse v. Boston*, 109 Mass. 446; *McLaughlin v. Correy*, 77 Penn. St. 109; *Boucher v. New Haven*, 40 Conn. 456; *Congdon v. Norwich*, 37 Conn. 414; *Stewart v. Ripon*, 38 Wis. 584; *Chapman v. Macon*, 55 Geo. 566; *Moore v. Minneapolis*, 19 Minn. 300; *Furnell v. St. Paul*, 20 Minn. 117; *Omaha v. Olmstead*, 5 Neb. 446; *Higert v. Green Castle*, 43 Ind. 574; *Providence v. Clapp*, 17 How. 161; *Smith v. Leavenworth*, 15 Kan. 81; *Atchison v. King*, 9 Kan. 550. For injury by limb falling from tree overhanging street: *Jones v. New Haven*, 34 Conn. 1. For failure to keep street in repair: *Gorham v. Cooperstown*, 59 N. Y. 236; *Hines v. Lockport*, 50 N. Y. 236; *Bell v. West Point*, 51 Miss. 262; *Chicago v. McGiven*, 78 Ill. 347; *Alton v. Hope*, 68 Ill. 167; *Centralia v. Scott*, 59 Ill. 129; *Winbigler v. Los Angeles*, 45 Cal. 36; *Market v. St. Louis*, 56 Mo. 189; *Wiley v. Belfast*, 61 Me. 434; *Bill v. Norwich*, 39 Conn. 222; *Lindholm v. St. Paul*, 19 Minn. 245; *Shartel v. Minneapolis*, 17 Minn. 308; *Leary v. Mankato*, 21 Minn. 65; *Griffin v. Williamstown*, 6 W. Va. 312. For failure to keep sewers in repair: *Munn v. Pittsburg*, 40 Penn. St. 364.

tions are generally questions between the corporators and the State, with which private individuals are supposed to have no concern. In proceedings where the question whether a corporation exists or not arises collaterally, the courts will not permit its corporate character to be questioned, if it appear to be acting under color of law, and recognized by the State as such. Such a question should be raised by the State itself, by *quo warranto* or other direct proceeding.¹ And the rule, we apprehend, would be no different, if the constitution itself prescribed the manner of incorporation. Even in such a case, proof that the corporation was acting as such, under legislative action, would be sufficient evidence of right, except as against the State; and private parties could not enter upon any question of regularity. And the State itself may justly be precluded, on the principle of estoppel, from raising such an objection, where there has been long acquiescence and recognition.²

¹ *State v. Carr*, 5 N. H. 367; *President, &c. of Mendota v. Thompson*, 20 Ill. 200; *Hamilton v. President, &c. of Carthage*, 24 Ill. 22. These were prosecutions by municipal corporations for recovery of penalties imposed by by-laws, and where the plea of *nul tiel* corporation was interposed and overruled. See also *Kayser v. Bremen*, 16 Mo. 88; *Kettering v. Jacksonville*, 50 Ill. 39; *Bird v. Perkins*, 33 Mich. 28.

² In *People v. Maynard*, 15 Mich. 470, where the invalidity of an act organizing a county, passed several years before, was suggested on constitutional grounds, *Campbell, J.*, says: "If this question had been raised immediately, we are not prepared to say that it would have been altogether free from difficulty. But inasmuch as the arrangement there indicated had been acted upon for ten years before the recent legislation, and had been recognized as valid by all parties interested, it cannot now be disturbed. Even in private associations the acts of parties interested may often estop them from relying on legal objections, which might have availed them if not waived.

But in public affairs, where the people have organized themselves under color of law into the ordinary municipal bodies, and have gone on year after year raising taxes, making improvements, and exercising their usual franchises, their rights are properly regarded as depending quite as much on the acquiescence as on the regularity of their origin, and no *ex post facto* inquiry can be permitted to undo their corporate existence. Whatever may be the rights of individuals before such general acquiescence, the corporate standing of the community can no longer be open to question. See *Rumsey v. People*, 19 N. Y. 41; and *Lanning v. Carpenter*, 20 N. Y. 474, where the effect of the invalidity of an original county organization is very well considered in its public and private bearings. There have been direct legislative recognitions of the new division on several occasions. The exercise of jurisdiction being notorious and open in all such cases, the State as well as county and town taxes being all levied under it, there is no principle which could justify any court, at this late day, in going back to in-

quire into the regularity of the law of 1857." A similar doctrine has been applied in support of the official character of persons who, without authority of law, have been named for municipal officers by State legislation, and whose action in such offices has been acquiesced in by the citizens or authorities of the municipality. See *People v. Salomon*, 54 Ill. 51 ; *People v. Lothrop*, 24 Mich. 235. Compare

Kimball v. Alcorn, 45 Miss. 151. But such acquiescence could not make them local officers and representatives of the people for new and enlarged powers subsequently attempted to be given by the legislature. *People v. Common Council of Detroit*, 28 Mich. 228. Nor in respect to powers not purely local. *People v. Springwells*, 25 Mich. 153. And see *People v. Albertson*, 55 N. Y. 50.

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* CHAPTER IX.

PROTECTION TO PERSON AND PROPERTY UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES.

As the government of the United States was one of enumerated powers, it was not deemed important by the framers of its Constitution that a bill of rights should be incorporated among its provisions. If, among the powers conferred, there was none which would authorize or empower the government to deprive the citizen of any of those fundamental rights which it is the object and the duty of government to protect and defend, and to insure which is the sole purpose of bills of rights, it was thought to be at least unimportant to insert negative clauses in that instrument, inhibiting the government from assuming any such powers, since the mere failure to confer them would leave all such powers beyond the sphere of its constitutional authority. And, as Mr. Hamilton argued, it might seem even dangerous to do so. "For why declare that things shall not be done which there is no power to do? Why, for instance, should it be said that the liberty of the press shall not be restrained, when no power is given by which restrictions may be imposed? I will not contend that such a provision would confer a regulating power; but it is evident that it would furnish, to men disposed to usurp, a plausible pretence for claiming that power. They might urge, with a semblance of reason, that the Constitution ought not to be charged with the absurdity of providing against the abuse of an authority which was not given, and that the provision against restraining the liberty of the press afforded a clear implication that a right to prescribe proper regulations concerning it was intended to be vested in the national government. This may serve as a specimen of the numerous handles which would be given to the doctrine of constructive powers, by the indulgence of an injudicious zeal for bills of rights." ¹

¹ Federalist, No. 84.

It was also thought that bills of rights, however important * under a monarchical government, were of no [* 257] moment in a constitution of government framed by the people for themselves, and under which public affairs were to be managed by means of agencies selected by the popular choice, and subject to frequent change by popular action. “It has been several times truly remarked, that bills of rights are, in their origin, stipulations between kings and their subjects, abridgments of prerogative in favor of privilege, reservations of rights not surrendered to the prince. Such was Magna Charta, obtained by the barons, sword in hand, from King John. Such were the subsequent confirmations of that charter by succeeding princes. Such was the Petition of Right, assented to by Charles the First, in the beginning of his reign. Such also was the Declaration of Right presented by the Lords and Commons to the Prince of Orange in 1688, and afterwards thrown into the form of an act of Parliament, called the Bill of Rights. It is evident, therefore, that, according to their primitive signification, they have no application to constitutions professedly founded upon the power of the people, and executed by their immediate representatives and servants. Here, in strictness, the people surrender nothing; and, as they retain every thing, they have no need of particular reservations. ‘WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES, to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do *ordain* and *establish* this Constitution for the United States of America.’ This is a better recognition of popular rights than volumes of those aphorisms which make the principal figure in several of our State bills of rights, and which would sound much better in a treatise of ethics than in a constitution of government.”¹

Reasoning like this was specious, but it was not satisfactory to many of the leading statesmen of that day, who believed that “the purposes of society do not require a surrender of all our rights to our ordinary governors; that there are certain portions of right not necessary to enable them to carry on an effective government, and which experience has nevertheless proved they will be constantly encroaching on, if submitted to them; that there are also certain fences which experience has proved peculiarly efficacious against wrong, and rarely obstructive of right,

¹ Federalist, No. 84, by Hamilton.

which yet the governing powers have ever shown a disposition to weaken and remove.”¹ And these governing powers [* 258] will be no less disposed * to be aggressive when chosen by majorities than when selected by the accident of birth, or at the will of privileged classes. Indeed if, during the long struggle for constitutional liberty in England, covering the whole of the seventeenth century, importance was justly attached to a distinct declaration and enumeration of individual rights on the part of the government, when it was still in the power of the governing authorities to infringe upon or to abrogate them at any time, and when, consequently, the declaration could possess only a moral force, a similar declaration would appear to be of even more value in the Constitution of the United States, where it would constitute authoritative law, and be subject to no modification or repeal, except by the people themselves whose rights it was designed to protect, nor even by them except in the manner by the Constitution provided.²

¹ Jefferson's Works, Vol. III. 201.

² Mr. Jefferson sums up the objections to a bill of rights in the Constitution of the United States, and answers them as follows: “1. That the rights in question are reserved by the manner in which the federal powers are granted. Answer: A constitutive act may certainly be so formed as to need no declaration of rights. The act itself has the force of a declaration, as far as it goes; and if it goes to all material points, nothing more is wanting. In the draft of a constitution which I had once a thought of proposing in Virginia, and printed afterwards, I endeavored to reach all the great objects of public liberty, and did not mean to add a declaration of rights. Probably the object was imperfectly executed; but the deficiencies would have been supplied by others in the course of discussion. But in a constitutive act which leaves some precious articles unnoticed, and raises implications against others, a declaration of rights becomes necessary by way of supplement. This is the case of our new federal Constitu-

tion. This instrument forms us into one State, as to certain objects, and gives us a legislative and executive body for those objects. It should therefore guard us against their abuses of power, within the field submitted to them. 2. A positive declaration of some essential rights could not be obtained in the requisite latitude. Answer: Half a loaf is better than no bread. If we cannot secure all our rights, let us secure what we can. 3. The limited powers of the federal government, and jealousy of the subordinate governments, afford a security, which exists in no other instance. Answer: The first member of this seems resolvable into the first objection before stated. The jealousy of the subordinate governments is a precious reliance. But observe that those governments are only agents. They must have principles furnished them whereon to found their opposition. The declaration of rights will be the text whereby they will try all the acts of the federal government. In this view it is necessary to the federal government also; as by the same text

* The want of a bill of rights was, therefore, made the [* 259] ground of a decided, earnest, and formidable opposition to the confirmation of the national Constitution by the people ; and its adoption was only secured in some of the leading States in connection with the recommendation of amendments which should cover the ground.¹

The clauses inserted in the original instrument, for the protection of person and property, had reference mainly to the action of the State governments, and were made limitations upon their power. The exceptions embraced a few cases only, in respect to which the experience of both English and American history had forcibly demonstrated the tendency of power to abuse, not when wielded by a prince only, but also when administered by the agencies of the people themselves.

Bills of attainder were prohibited to be passed, either by the Congress² or by the legislatures of the several States.³ Attainder, in a strict sense, means an extinction of civil and political rights and capacities ; and at the common law it followed, as of course, on conviction and sentence to death for treason ; and, in greater or less degree, on conviction and sentence for the different classes of felony.

A bill of attainder was a legislative conviction for alleged

they may try the opposition of the subordinate governments. 4. Experience proves the inefficacy of a bill of rights. True. But though it is not absolutely efficacious, under all circumstances, it is of great potency always, and rarely inefficacious. A brace the more will often keep up the building which would have fallen with that brace the less. There is a remarkable difference between the characters of the inconveniences which attend a declaration of rights, and those which attend the want of it. The inconveniences of the declaration are, that it may cramp government in its useful exertions. But the evil of this is short-lived, moderate, and repairable. The inconveniences of the want of a declaration are permanent, afflictive, and irreparable. They are in constant progression from bad to

worse. The executive, in our governments, is not the sole, it is scarcely the principal, object of my jealousy. The tyranny of the legislatures is the most formidable dread at present, and will be for many years. That of the executive will come in its turn ; but it will be at a remote period." Letter to Madison, March 15, 1789, 3 Jefferson's Works, p. 4. See also same volume, pp. 13 and 101 ; Vol. II. pp. 329, 358.

¹ For the various recommendations by Massachusetts, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island, see 1 Elliott's Debates, 322-334.

² Constitution of United States, art. 1, § 9.

³ Constitution of United States, art. 1, § 10.

crime, with judgment of death. Such convictions have not been uncommon under other governments, and the power to pass these bills has been exercised by the Parliament of England at some periods in its history, under the most oppressive and [* 260] unjustifiable * circumstances, greatly aggravated by an arbitrary course of procedure, which had few of the incidents of a judicial investigation into alleged crime. For some time before the American Revolution, however, no one had attempted to defend it as a legitimate exercise of power; and if it would be unjustifiable anywhere, there were many reasons why it would be specially obnoxious under a free government, and why consequently its prohibition, under the existing circumstances of our country, would be a matter of more than ordinary importance. Every one must concede that a legislative body, from its numbers and organization, and from the very intimate dependence of its members upon the people, which renders them liable to be peculiarly susceptible to popular clamor, is not properly constituted to try with coolness, caution, and impartiality a criminal charge, especially in those cases in which the popular feeling is strongly excited, — the very class of cases most likely to be prosecuted by this mode. And although it would be conceded that, if such bills were allowable, they should properly be presented only for offences against the general laws of the land, and be proceeded with on the same full opportunity for investigation and defence which is afforded in the courts of the common law, yet it was remembered that in practice they were often resorted to because an obnoxious person was not subject to punishment under the general law,¹ or because, in proceeding against him by this mode, some rule of the common

¹ Cases of this description were most numerous during the reign of Henry VIII., and among the victims was Cromwell, who is said to have first advised that monarch to resort to this objectionable proceeding. Even the dead were attainted, as in the case of Richard III., and later, of the heroes of the Commonwealth. The most atrocious instance in history, however, only relieved by its weakness and futility, was the great act of attainder passed in 1688 by the Par-

liament of James II., assembled in Dublin, by which between two and three thousand persons were attainted, their property confiscated, and themselves sentenced to death if they failed to appear at a time named. And, to render the whole proceeding as horrible in barbarity as possible, the list of the proscribed was carefully kept secret until after the time fixed for their appearance! Macaulay's History of England, c. 12.

law requiring a particular species or degree of evidence might be evaded, and a conviction secured on proofs that a jury would not be suffered to accept as overcoming the legal presumption of innocence. Whether the accused should necessarily be served with process; what degree or species of evidence should be required; whether the rules of law should be * fol- [* 261] lowed, either in determining what constituted a crime, or in dealing with the accused after conviction, — were all questions which would necessarily address themselves to the legislative discretion and sense of justice; and the very qualities which are essential in a court to protect individuals on trial before them against popular clamor, or the hate of those in power, were precisely those which were likely to prove weak or wanting in the legislative body at such a time.¹ And what could be more obnoxious in a free government than the exercise of such a power by a popular body, controlled by a mere majority, fresh from the contests of exciting elections, and quite too apt, under the most favorable circumstances, to suspect the motives of their adversaries, and to resort to measures of doubtful propriety to secure party ends?

Nor were legislative punishments of this severe character the only ones known to parliamentary history; there were others of a milder form, which were only less obnoxious in that the consequences were less terrible. Those legislative convictions which imposed punishments less than that of death were called bills of pains and penalties, as distinguished from bills of attainder; but the constitutional provisions we have referred to were undoubtedly aimed at any and every species of legislative punishment for criminal or supposed criminal offences; and the term “bill of attainder” is used in a generic sense, which would include bills of pains and penalties also.²

¹ This was equally true, whether the attainder was at the command of the king, as in the case of Cardinal Pole’s mother, or at the instigation of the populace, as in the case of Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. The last infliction of capital punishment in England, under a bill of attainder, was upon Sir John Fenwick, in the reign of William and Mary. It is worthy of note that in the preceding

reign Sir John had been prominent in the attainder of the unhappy Monmouth. Macaulay’s History of England, c. 5.

² Fletcher v. Peck, 6 Cranch, 138; Story on Constitution, § 1344; Cummings v. Missouri, 4 Wall. 277; *Ex parte Garland*, 4 Wall. 333; *Drehman v. Stifle*, 8 Wall. 595, 601. “I think it will be found that the following comprise those essential elements of

[* 262] * The thoughtful reader will not fail to discover, in the acts of the American States during the Revolutionary period, sufficient reason for this constitutional provision, even if the still more monitory history of the English attainders had not been so freshly remembered. Some of these acts provided for the forfeiture of the estates, within the Commonwealth, of those British subjects who had withdrawn from the jurisdiction because not satisfied that grievances existed sufficiently serious to justify the last resort of an oppressed people, or because of other reasons not satisfactory to the existing authorities; and the only investigation provided for was an inquiry into the desertion. Others mentioned particular persons by name, adjudged them guilty of adhering to the enemies of the State, and proceeded to inflict punishment upon them, so far as the presence of property within the Commonwealth would enable the government to do so.¹ These were the resorts of a time of extreme peril; and if possible to justify them in a period of revolution, when every thing was staked on success, and when the public safety would not permit too much weight to scruples concerning the private rights of those who were not aiding the popular cause, the power to repeat such acts under any conceivable circumstances in which the country could be placed again was felt to be too dangerous

bills of attainder, in addition to those I have already mentioned [which were that they declared certain persons attainted and their blood corrupted, so that it had lost all heritable property], which distinguish them from other legislation, and which made them so obnoxious to the statesmen who organized our government: 1. They were convictions and sentences pronounced by the legislative department of the government, instead of the judicial. 2. The sentence pronounced and the punishment inflicted were determined by no previous law or fixed rule. 3. The investigation into the guilt of the accused, if any such were made, was not necessarily or generally conducted in his presence or that of his counsel, and no recognized rule of evidence governed the inquiry." Per *Miller*, J., in *Ex parte Garland*, 4 Wall. 388.

¹ See Belknap's History of New Hampshire, c. 26; 2 Ramsay's History of South Carolina, 351; 8 Rhode Island Colonial Records, 609; 2 Arnold's History of Rhode Island, 360, 449; *Thompson v. Carr*, 5 N. H. 510; *Sleight v. Kane*, 2 Johns. Cas. 236; *Story on Const.* (4th ed.) § 1344, note. On the general subject of bills of attainder, one would do well to consult, in addition to the cases in 4 Wallace, those of *Blair v. Ridgeley*, 41 Mo. 63 (where it was very elaborately examined by able counsel); *State v. Staten*, 6 Cold. 248; *Randolph v. Good*, 3 W. Va. 551; *Ex parte Law*, decided by Judge Erskine, in the United States District Court of Georgia, May term, 1866; *State v. Adams*, 44 Mo. 570; *Beirne v. Brown*, 4 W. Va. 72; *Peerce v. Carskadon*, 4 W. Va. 234.

to be left in the legislative hands. So far as proceedings had been completed under those acts, before the treaty of 1783, by the actual transfer of property, they remained valid and effectual afterwards; but so far as they were then incomplete, they were put an end to by that treaty.¹

The conviction of the propriety of this constitutional provision has been so universal, that it has never been questioned, either in legislative bodies or elsewhere. Nevertheless, cases have recently arisen, growing out of the attempt to break up and destroy the government of the United States, in which the Supreme Court of * the United States has adjudged certain action [* 263] of Congress to be in violation of this provision and consequently void.² The action referred to was designed to exclude

¹ Jackson v. Munson, 3 Caines, 137.

² On the 2d of July, 1862, Congress, by "an act to prescribe an oath of office, and for other purposes," enacted that "hereafter every person elected or appointed to any office of honor or profit under the government of the United States, either in the civil, military, or naval departments of the public service, excepting the President of the United States, shall, before entering upon the duties of such office, take and subscribe the following oath or affirmation: I, A B, do solemnly swear or affirm that I have never voluntarily borne arms against the United States since I have been a citizen thereof; that I have voluntarily given no aid, countenance, counsel, or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto; that I have neither sought nor accepted, nor attempted to exercise, the functions of any office whatever, under any authority or pretended authority in hostility to the United States; that I have not yielded a voluntary support to any pretended government, authority, power, or constitution within the United States, hostile or inimical thereto. And I do further swear or affirm that, to the best of my knowledge and ability, I will support and

defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic: that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God." On the 24th of January, 1865, Congress passed a supplementary act as follows: "No person after the date of this act shall be admitted to the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States, or at any time after the 4th of March next shall be admitted to the bar of any Circuit or District Court of the United States, or of the Court of Claims, as an attorney or counsellor of such court, or shall be allowed to appear and to be heard in any such court, by virtue of any previous admission, or any special power of attorney, unless he shall have first taken and subscribed the oath" aforesaid. False swearing, under each of the acts, was made perjury. See 12 Statutes at Large, 502; 13 Statutes at Large, 424. In *Ex parte Garland*, 4 Wall. 333, a majority of the court held the second of these acts void, as partaking of the nature of a bill of pains and penalties, and also as being an *ex post facto*

from practice in the United States courts all persons who had taken up arms against the government during the recent rebellion, or who had voluntarily given aid and encouragement to its enemies; and the mode adopted to effect the exclusion was to require of all persons, before they should be admitted to the bar or allowed to practise, an oath negating any such disloyal action. This decision was not at first universally accepted as sound; and the Supreme Courts of West Virginia and of the District of Columbia declined to follow it, insisting that permission to practise in the courts is not a right, but a privilege, and that the [* 264] withholding * it for any reason of State policy or personal unfitness could not be regarded as the infliction of criminal punishment.¹

The Supreme Court of the United States have also, upon the same reasoning, held a clause in the Constitution of Missouri, which, among other things, excluded all priests and clergymen from practising or teaching unless they should first take a similar oath of loyalty, to be void, overruling in so doing a decision of the Supreme Court of that State.²

law. The act was looked upon as inflicting a punishment for past conduct; the exaction of the oath being the mode provided for ascertaining the parties upon whom the act was intended to operate. See *Drehman v. Stifle*, 8 Wall. 595. The conclusion declared by the Supreme Court of the United States in *Ex parte Garland* had been previously reached by Judge *Trigg*, of the United States Circuit Court, in *Matter of Baxter*; by Judge *Busteed*, of the District Court of Alabama, in *Matter of Shorter et al.*; and by Judge *Erskine*, of the District Court of Georgia, in *Ex parte Law*. An elector cannot be excluded from the right to vote on the ground of being a deserter who has never been tried and convicted as such. *Huber v. Reily*, 53 Penn. St. 112; *McCafferty v. Guyer*, 59 Penn. St. 109; *State v. Symonds*, 57 Me. 148. See *ante*, p. *64, note.

¹ See the cases of *Ex parte Magruder*, American Law Register, Vol.

VI. n. s. p. 292; and *Ex parte Hunter*, American Law Register, Vol. VI. n. s. 410; 2 W. Va. 122; *Ex parte Quarrier*, 4 W. Va. 210. See also *Cohen v. Wright*, 22 Cal. 293; *Ex parte Yale*, 24 Cal. 241.

² *Cummings v. Missouri*, 4 Wall. 277. See also the case of *State v. Adams*, 44 Mo. 570, in which it was held that a legislative act declaring that the board of curators of St. Charles College had forfeited their office, was of the nature of a bill of attainder and void. The Missouri oath of loyalty was a very stringent one, and applied to electors, State, county, city, and town officers, officers in any corporation, public or private, professors and teachers in educational institutions, attorneys and counsellors, bishops, priests, deacons, ministers, elders, or other clergymen of any denomination. The Supreme Court of Missouri had held this provision valid in the following cases: *State v. Gargesche*, 36 Mo. 256, case of an attorney;

Ex post facto laws are also, by the same provisions of the national Constitution already cited,¹ forbidden to be passed, either by the States or by Congress.

At an early day it was settled by authoritative decision, in opposition to what might seem the more natural and obvious meaning of the term *ex post facto*, that in their scope and purpose these provisions were confined to laws respecting criminal punishments, and had no relation whatever to retrospective legislation of any other description. And it has, therefore, been repeatedly held, that retrospective laws, when not of a criminal nature, do not come in conflict with the national Constitution, unless obnoxious to its provisions on other grounds than their retrospective character.

“The prohibition in the letter,” says *Chase, J.*, in the leading case,² “is not to pass any law concerning or after the fact; but the plain and obvious meaning and intention of the prohibition is this: that the legislatures of the several States shall not pass laws after a fact done by a subject or citizen, which shall have relation to such fact, and punish him for having done it. The prohibition, * considered in this light, is an additional [* 265] bulwark in favor of the personal security of the subject, to protect his person from punishment by legislative acts having a retrospective operation. I do not think it was inserted to secure the citizen in his private rights of either property or contracts. The prohibitions not to make any thing but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debts, and not to pass any law impairing the obligation of contracts, were inserted to secure private rights; but the restriction not to pass any *ex post facto* law

State v. Cummings, 36 Mo. 263, case of a minister, reversed as above stated; *State v. Bernoudy*, 36 Mo. 279, case of the recorder of St. Louis; *State v. McAdoo*, 38 Mo. 452, where it is held that a certificate of election issued to one who failed to take the oath as required by the constitution was void. In *Beirne v. Brown*, 4 W. Va. 72, and *Peerce v. Carskadon*, 4 W. Va. 234, an act excluding persons from the privilege of sustaining suits in the courts of the State, or from proceedings for a rehearing, except upon

their taking an oath that they had never been engaged in hostile measures against the government, was sustained. And see *State v. Neal*, 42 Mo. 119. *Contra*, *Kyle v. Jenkins*, 6 W. Va. 371; *Lynch v. Hoffman*, 7 W. Va. 553. The case of *Peerce v. Carskadon* was reversed in 16 Wall. 234, being held covered by the case of *Cummings v. Missouri*

¹ Constitution of United States, art. 1, §§ 9 and 10.

² *Calder v. Bull*, 3 Dall. 390.

was to secure the person of the subject from injury or punishment, in consequence of such law. If the prohibition against making *ex post facto* laws was intended to secure personal rights from being affected or injured by such law, and the prohibition is sufficiently extensive for that object, the other restraints I have enumerated were unnecessary, and therefore improper, for both of them are retrospective.

“I will state what laws I consider *ex post facto* laws, within the words and the intent of the prohibition. 1st. Every law that makes an action done before the passing of the law, and which was innocent when done, criminal, and punishes such action. 2d. Every law that aggravates a crime, or makes it greater than it was when committed. 3d. Every law that changes the punishment, and inflicts a greater punishment than the law annexed to the crime when committed. 4th. Every law that alters the legal rules of evidence, and receives less or different testimony than the law required at the time of the commission of the offence, in order to convict the offender. All these and similar laws are manifestly unjust and oppressive. In my opinion, the true distinction is between *ex post facto* laws and retrospective laws. Every *ex post facto* law must necessarily be retrospective, but every retrospective law is not an *ex post facto* law; the former only are prohibited. Every law that takes away or impairs rights vested, agreeably to existing laws, is retrospective and is generally unjust, and may be oppressive; and there is a good general rule, that a law should have no retrospect; but there are cases in which laws may justly, and for the benefit of the community, and also of individuals, relate to a time antecedent to their commencement; as statutes of oblivion or of pardon. They are certainly retrospective, and literally both concerning and after the facts committed. But I do not consider any law *ex post facto*, within the prohibition that mollifies the rigor of the criminal [* 266] law; but * only those that create or aggravate the crime, or increase the punishment, or change the rules of evidence for the purpose of conviction. Every law that is to have an operation before the making thereof, as to commence at an antecedent time, or to save time from the statute of limitations, or to excuse acts which were unlawful, and before committed, and the like, is retrospective. But such acts may be proper and necessary, as the case may be. There is a great and apparent

difference between making an unlawful act lawful, and the making an innocent act criminal, and punishing it as a crime. The expressions *ex post facto* are technical ; they had been in use long before the Revolution, and had acquired an appropriate meaning, by legislators, lawyers, and authors.”¹

Assuming this construction of the constitutional provision to be correct,—and it has been accepted and followed as correct by the courts ever since,—it would seem that little need be said relative to the first, second, and fourth classes of *ex post facto* laws, as enumerated in the opinion quoted. It is not essential, however, in order to render a law invalid on these grounds, that it should expressly assume the action to which it relates to be criminal, or provide for its punishment on that ground. If it shall subject an individual to a pecuniary penalty for an act which, when done, involved no responsibility,² or if it deprives a party of any valuable right—like the right to follow a lawful calling—for acts which were innocent, or at least not punishable by law when committed,³ the law will be *ex post facto* in the constitutional sense, notwithstanding it does not in terms declare the acts to which the penalty is attached criminal.⁴ But how far a law may change the punishment for a criminal offence, and make the change applicable to past offences, is certainly a question of great * difficulty, which has been increased by the [* 267] decisions made concerning it. As the constitutional provision is enacted for the protection and security of accused parties

¹ See also *Fletcher v. Peck*, 6 Cranch, 87; *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 266; *Satterlee v. Mathewson*, 2 Pet. 380; *Watson v. Mercer*, 8 Pet. 110; *Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge*, 11 Pet. 421; *Carpenter v. Pennsylvania*, 17 How. 463; *Cummings v. Missouri*, 4 Wall. 277; *Ex parte Garland*, 4 Wall. 333; *Baugh v. Nelson*, 9 Gill, 299; *Woart v. Winnick*, 3 N. H. 475; *Locke v. Dane*, 9 Mass. 363; *Dash v. Van Kleeck*, 7 Johns. 497; *Evans v. Montgomery*, 4 W. & S. 218; *Tucker v. Harris*, 13 Geo. 1; *Perry's Case*, 3 Grat. 632; *Municipality No. 1 v. Wheeler*, 10 La. Ann. 745; *New Orleans v. Poutz*, 14 La. Ann. 853; *Huber v. Reily*, 53 Penn. St. 115;

Wilson v. Ohio, &c. R. R. Co., 64 Ill. 542.

² *Falconer v. Campbell*, 2 McLean, 212; *Wilson v. Ohio, &c. R. R. Co.*, 64 Ill. 542.

³ *Cummings v. Missouri*, 4 Wall. 277; *Ex parte Garland*, 4 Wall. 333. But a divorce is not a punishment, and it may therefore be authorized for causes happening previous to the passage of the divorce act. *Carson v. Carson*, 40 Miss. 349.

⁴ The repeal of an amnesty law by a constitutional convention was held in *State v. Keith*, 63 N. C. 140, to be *ex post facto* as to the cases covered by the law. An act to validate an invalid conviction would be *ex post facto*. *In re Murphy*, 1 Woolw. 141.

against arbitrary and oppressive legislative action, it is evident that any change in the law which goes in mitigation of the punishment is not liable to this objection.¹ But what does go in mitigation of the punishment? If the law makes a fine less in amount, or imprisonment shorter in point of duration, or relieves it from some oppressive incident, or if it dispenses with some severable portion of the legal penalty, no embarrassment would be experienced in reaching a conclusion that the law was favorable to the accused, and therefore not *ex post facto*. But who shall say, when the nature of the punishment is altogether changed, and a fine is substituted for the pillory, or imprisonment for whipping, or imprisonment at hard labor for life for the death penalty, that the punishment is diminished, or at least not increased by the change made? What test of severity does the law or reason furnish in these cases? and must the judge decide upon his own view of the pain, loss, ignominy, and collateral consequences usually attending the punishment? or may he take into view the peculiar condition of the accused, and upon that determine whether, in his particular case, the punishment prescribed by the new law is more severe than that under the old or not?

In *State v. Arlin*,² the respondent was charged with a robbery, which, under the law as it existed at the time it was committed, was subject to be punished by solitary imprisonment not exceeding six months, and confinement for life at hard labor in the State prison. As incident to this severe punishment, he was entitled by the same law to have counsel assigned him by the government, to process to compel the attendance of witnesses, to a copy of his indictment, a list of the jurors who were to try him, &c. Before he was brought to trial, the punishment for the offence was reduced to solitary imprisonment not exceeding six months, and confinement at hard labor in the State prison for not less than seven nor more than thirty years. By the new act, the court, if *they thought proper*, were to assign the respondent counsel, and * furnish him with process to compel the attendance of witnesses in his behalf; and, acting under this discretion, the court assigned the respondent counsel, but declined

¹ *Strong v. State*, 1 Blackf. 193; 261; *Maul v. State*, 25 Tex. 166. *Keen v. State*, 3 Chand. 109; *Boston v. Cummins*, 16 Geo. 102; *Woart v. Winnick*, 3 N. H. 473; *State v. Arlin*, 39 N. H. 180; *Clarke v. State*, 23 Miss. To provide an alternative punishment of a milder form is not *ex post facto*. *Turner v. State*, 40 Ala. 21.

² 39 N. H. 179.

to do more ; while the respondent insisted that he was entitled to all the privileges to which he would have been entitled had the law remained unchanged. The court held this claim to be unfounded in the law. "It is contended," they say, "that, notwithstanding the severity of the respondent's punishment was mitigated by the alteration of the statute, he is entitled to the privileges demanded, as incidents to the offence with which he is charged, at the date of its commission ; in other words, it seems to be claimed, that, by committing the alleged offence, the respondent acquired a vested right to have counsel assigned him, to be furnished with process to procure the attendance of witnesses, and to enjoy all the other privileges to which he would have been entitled if tried under laws subjecting him to imprisonment for life upon conviction. This position appears to us wholly untenable. We have no doubt the privileges the respondent claims were designed and created solely as incidents of the severe punishment to which his offence formerly subjected him, and not as incidents of the offence. When the punishment was abolished, its incidents fell with it ; and he might as well claim the right to be punished under the former law as to be entitled to the privileges connected with a trial under it." ¹

In *Strong v. State*,² the plaintiff in error was indicted and convicted * of perjury, which, under the law as it [* 269] existed at the time it was committed, was punishable by not exceeding one hundred stripes. Before the trial, this pun-

¹ With great deference it may be suggested whether this case does not overlook the important circumstance, that the new law, by taking from the accused that absolute right to defence by counsel, and to the other privileges by which the old law surrounded the trial, — all of which were designed as securities against unjust convictions, — was directly calculated to increase the party's peril, and was in consequence brought within the reason of the rule which holds a law *ex post facto* which changes the rules of evidence after the fact, so as to make a less amount or degree sufficient. Could a law be void as *ex post facto* which made a party liable to conviction for perjury in a previous oath on

the testimony of a single witness, and another law unobjectionable on this score which deprived a party, when put on trial for a previous act, of all the usual opportunities of exhibiting the facts and establishing his innocence? Undoubtedly, if the party accused was always guilty, and certain to be convicted, the new law must be regarded as mitigating the offence ; but, assuming every man to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty, could such a law be looked upon as "mollifying the rigor" of the prior law, or as favorable to the accused, when its mollifying circumstance is more than counterbalanced by others of a contrary character.

² 1 Blackf. 193.

ishment was changed to imprisonment in the penitentiary not exceeding seven years. The court held this amendatory law not to be *ex post facto*, as applied to the case. "The words *ex post facto* have a definite, technical signification. The plain and obvious meaning of this prohibition is, that the legislature shall not pass any law, after a fact done by any citizen, which shall have relation to that fact, so as to punish that which was innocent when done, or to add to the punishment of that which was criminal, or to increase the malignity of a crime, or to retrench the rules of evidence so as to make conviction more easy." "Apply this definition to the act under consideration. Does this statute make a new offence? It does not. Does it increase the malignity of that which was an offence before? It does not. Does it so change the rules of evidence as to make conviction more easy? This cannot be alleged. Does it then increase the punishment of that which was criminal before its enactment? We think not."¹

So in Texas it has been held that the infliction of stripes, from the peculiarly degrading character of the punishment, was worse than the death penalty. "Among all nations of civilized man, from the earliest ages, the infliction of stripes has been considered more degrading than death itself."² While, on the other hand, in South Carolina, where, at the time of the commission of a forgery, the punishment was death, but it was changed before final judgment to fine, whipping, and imprisonment, the new law was applied to the case in passing the sentence.³ These

¹ Mr. Bishop says of this decision: "But certainly the court went far in this case." 1 Bishop, Crim. Law, § 219 (108).

² Herber v. State, 7 Tex. 69.

³ State v. Williams, 2 Rich. 418. In Clark v. State, 23 Miss. 261, defendant was convicted of a mayhem. Between the commission of the act and his conviction, a statute had been passed, changing the punishment for this offence from the pillory and a fine to imprisonment in the penitentiary, but providing further, that "no offence committed, and no penalty and forfeiture incurred previous to the time when this act shall take

effect shall be affected by this act, except that when any punishment, forfeiture, or penalty should have been mitigated by it, its provisions should be applied to the judgment to be pronounced for offences committed before its adoption." In regard to this statute the court say: "We think that in every case of offence committed before the adoption of the penitentiary code, the prisoner has the option of selecting the punishment prescribed in that code in lieu of that to which he was liable before its enactment." But inasmuch as the record did not show that the defendant claimed a commutation of his

cases illustrate * the difficulty of laying down any rule [* 270] which will be readily and universally accepted as to what is a mitigation of punishment, where its character is changed, and when from the very nature of the case there can be no common standard, by which all minds, however educated, can measure the relative severity and ignominy.

In *Hartung v. People*,¹ the law providing for the infliction of capital punishment had been so changed as to require the party liable to this penalty to be sentenced to confinement at hard labor in the State prison until the punishment of death should be inflicted; and it further provided that such punishment should not be inflicted under one year, nor until the governor should issue his warrant for the purpose. The act was evidently designed for the benefit of parties convicted, and, among other things, to enable advantage to be taken, for their benefit, of any circumstances subsequently coming to light which might show the injustice of the judgment, or throw any more favorable light on the action of the accused. Nevertheless, the court held the act inoperative as to offences before committed. "In my opinion," says *Denio, J.*, "it would be perfectly competent for the legislature, by a general law, to remit any separable portion of the prescribed punishment. For instance, if the punishment were fine and imprisonment, a law which should dispense with either the fine or the imprisonment might, I think, be lawfully applied to existing offences; and so, in my opinion, the term of imprisonment might be reduced, or the number of stripes diminished, in cases punishable in that manner. Any thing which, if applied to an individual sentence, would fairly fall within the idea of a remission of a part of the sentence, would not be liable to objection. And any change which should be referable to prison discipline or penal administration as its primary object might also be made to take effect upon past as well as future offences; as changes in the manner or kind of employment of convicts sentenced to hard labor, the system of supervision, the means of restraint, or the like. Changes of this * sort might operate [* 271] to increase or mitigate the severity of the punishment of

punishment, the court confirmed a State, 2 Tex. 363; *Dawson v. State*, sentence imposed according to the 6 Tex. 347.
 terms of the old law. On this sub-¹ 22 N. Y. 105.
 ject, see further the cases of *Holt v.*

the convict, but would not raise any question under the constitutional provision we are considering. The change wrought by the act of 1860, in the punishment of existing offences of murder, does not fall within either of these exceptions. If it is to be construed to vest in the governor a discretion to determine whether the convict should be executed or remain a perpetual prisoner at hard labor, this would only be equivalent to what he might do under the authority to commute a sentence. But he can, under the Constitution, only do this once for all. If he refuses the pardon, the convict is executed according to sentence. If he grants it, his jurisdiction of the case ends. The act in question places the convict at the mercy of the governor in office at the expiration of one year from the time of the conviction, and of all of his successors during the lifetime of the convict. He may be ordered to execution at any time, upon any notice, or without notice. Under one of the repealed sections of the Revised Statutes, it was required that a period should intervene between the sentence and execution of not less than four, nor more than eight weeks. If we stop here, the change effected by the statute is between an execution within a limited time, to be prescribed by the court, or a pardon or commutation of the sentence during that period, on the one hand, and the placing the convict at the mercy of the executive magistrate for the time, and his successors, to be executed at his pleasure at any time after one year, on the other. The sword is indefinitely suspended over his head, ready to fall at any time. It is not enough to say, if even that can be said, that most persons would probably prefer such a fate to the former capital sentence. It is enough to bring the law within the condemnation of the Constitution, that it changes the punishment after the commission of the offence, by substituting for the prescribed penalty a different one. We have no means of saying whether one or the other would be the most severe in a given case. That would depend upon the disposition and temperament of the convict. The legislature cannot thus experiment upon the criminal law. *The law, moreover, prescribes one year's imprisonment, at hard labor in the State prison, in addition to the punishment of death.* In every case of the execution of a capital sentence, it must be preceded by the year's imprisonment at hard labor. True, the concluding part of the punishment [* 272] cannot be executed *unless the governor concurs by

ordering the execution. But as both parts may, in any given case, be inflicted, and as the convict is consequently, under this law, exposed to the double infliction, it is, within both the definitions which have been mentioned, an *ex post facto* law. It changes the punishment, and inflicts a greater punishment than that which the law annexed to the crime when committed. It is enough, in my opinion, that it changes it *in any manner* except by dispensing with divisible portions of it; but upon the other definition announced by Judge *Chase*, where it is implied that the change must be from a less to a greater punishment, this act cannot be sustained." This decision has since been several times followed in the State of New York,¹ and it must now be regarded as the settled law of that State, that "a law changing the punishment for offences committed before its passage is *ex post facto* and void, under the Constitution, unless the change consists in the remission of some separable part of the punishment before prescribed, or is referable to prison discipline or penal administration as its primary object."² And this rule seems to us a sound and sensible one, with perhaps this single qualification, — that the substitution of any other punishment for that of death must be regarded as a mitigation of the penalty.³

But so far as mere modes of procedure are concerned, a party has no more right, in a criminal than in a civil action, to insist that his case shall be disposed of under the law in force when the act to be investigated is charged to have taken place. Remedies must always be under the control of the legislature, and it would create endless confusion in legal proceedings if every case was to be conducted only in accordance with the rules of practice, and heard only by the courts, in existence when its facts arose. The legislature may abolish courts and create new ones, and it may prescribe altogether different modes of procedure in its discretion, though it cannot lawfully, we think, in so doing, dispense with any of those substantial protections with which the existing law surrounds the person accused of crime. Statutes

¹ *Shepherd v. People*, 25 N. Y. People, 29 N. Y. 124. See *Miles v. 406*; *Ratzky v. People*, 29 N. Y. 124; *State*, 40 Ala. 39.

Kuckler v. People, 5 Park. Cr. Rep. 212.

² See 1 Bishop, *Crim. Law*, § 219 (108).

³ Per *Davies, J.*, in *Ratzky v.*

giving the government additional challenges,¹ and others [* 273] which authorized * the amendment of indictments,² have been sustained and applied to past transactions, as doubtless would be any similar statute, calculated merely to improve the remedy, and in its operation working no injustice to the defendant, and depriving him of no substantial right.

And a law is not objectionable as *ex post facto* which, in providing for the punishment of future offences, authorizes the offender's conduct in the past to be taken into the account, and the punishment to be graduated accordingly. Heavier penalties are often provided by law for a second or any subsequent offence than for the first; and it has not been deemed objectionable that, in providing for such heavier penalties, the prior conviction authorized to be taken into the account may have taken place before the law was passed.³ In such case, it is the second or

¹ Walston v. Commonwealth, 16 B. Monr. 15; Jones v. State, 1 Kelly, 610; Warren v. Commonwealth, 37 Penn. St. 45; Walter v. People, 32 N. Y. 147; State v. Ryan, 13 Minn. 370; State v. Wilson, 48 N. H. 398; Commonwealth v. Dorsey, 103 Mass. 412.

² State v. Manning, 14 Tex. 402; Lasure v. State, 19 Ohio, N. S. 43. See State v. Corson, 59 Me. 137. The defendant in any case must be proceeded against and punished under the law in force when the proceeding is had. State v. Williams, 2 Rich. 418; Keene v. State, 2 Chand. 109; People v. Phelps, 5 Wend. 9; Rand v. Commonwealth, 9 Grat. 738. A law is not unconstitutional which precludes a defendant in a criminal case from taking advantage of variances which do not prejudice him. Commonwealth v. Hall, 97 Mass. 570; Lasure v. State, 19 Ohio, N. S. 43. Nor one which reduces the number of the prisoner's peremptory challenge. Dowling v. State, 5 S. & M. 664. Nor one which, though passed after the commission of the offence, authorizes a change of venue to another county of the judicial dis-

trict. Gut v. State, 9 Wall. 35. Nor one which modifies the grounds of challenge. Stokes v. People, 53 N. Y. 164. Nor one which merely modifies, simplifies, and reduces the essential allegations in a criminal indictment, retaining the charge of a distinct offence. State v. Learned, 47 Me. 426; State v. Corson, 59 Me. 137. And see People v. Mortimer, 46 Cal. 114. Nor one, it seems, which requires an oath of past loyalty of voters. Blair v. Ridgeley, 41 Mo. 63; State v. Neal, 42 Mo. 119. *Contra*, Green v. Shumway, 39 N. Y. 418. And see cases cited, *ante*, p. *64, note. But a statute providing that the rule of law precluding a conviction on the uncorroborated testimony of an accomplice should not apply to cases of misdemeanor, it was held could not have retrospective operation. Hart v. State, 40 Ala. 32.

³ Rand v. Commonwealth, 9 Grat. 738; Ross's Case, 2 Pick. 165; People v. Butler, 3 Cow. 347; *Ex parte* Guiterrez, 45 Cal. 429. Extradition treaties may provide for the surrender of persons charged with offences previously committed. *In re* Giacomo, 12 Blatch. 391.

subsequent offence that is punished, not the first ;¹ and the statute would be void if the offence to be actually punished under it had been committed before it had taken effect, even though it was after its passage.²

Laws impairing the Obligation of Contracts.

The Constitution of the United States also forbids the States passing any law impairing the obligation of contracts.³ It is remarkable that this very important clause was passed over almost without comment during the discussions preceding the adoption of that instrument, though since its adoption no clause which the Constitution contains has been more prolific of litigation, or given rise to more animated and at times angry controversy. It is but twice alluded to in the papers of the Federalist ;⁴ and though its great importance is assumed, it is evident that the writer had no conception of the prominence it was afterwards to hold in constitutional discussions, or of the very numerous cases to which it was to be applied in practice.

The first question that arises under this provision is, What is a *contract in the sense in which the word is [* 274] here employed? In the leading case upon this subject, it appeared that the legislature of Georgia had made a grant of land, but afterwards, on an allegation that the grant had been obtained by fraud, a subsequent legislature had passed another act annulling and rescinding the first conveyance, and asserting the right of the State to the land it covered. "A contract," says Ch. J. *Marshall*, "is a compact between two or more parties, and is either executory or executed. An executory contract is one in which a party binds himself to do or not to do a particular thing. Such was the law under which the conveyance was made by the governor. A contract executed is one in which the object of the contract is performed ; and this, says Blackstone, differs in nothing from a grant. The contract between Georgia and the purchasers was executed by the grant. A contract executed, as well as one which is executory, contains obligations binding on

¹ *Rand v. Commonwealth*, 9 Grat. 788.

² *Riley's Case*, 2 Pick. 172.

³ Const. art. 1, § 10.

⁴ *Federalist*, Nos. 7 and 44.

the parties. A grant, in its own nature, amounts to an extinguishment of the right of the grantor, and implies a contract not to reassert that right. A party is, therefore, always estopped by his own grant. Since then, in fact, a grant is a contract executed, the obligation of which still continues, and since the Constitution uses the general term 'contract,' without distinguishing between those which are executory and those which are executed, it must be construed to comprehend the latter as well as the former. A law annulling conveyances between individuals, and declaring that the grantors should stand seized of their former estates, notwithstanding those grants, would be as repugnant to the Constitution as a law discharging the vendors of property from the obligation of executing their contracts by conveyances. It would be strange if a contract to convey was secured by the Constitution, while an absolute conveyance remained unprotected. If, under a fair construction of the Constitution, grants are comprehended under the term 'contracts,' is a grant from the State excluded from the operation of the provision? Is the clause to be considered as inhibiting the State from impairing the obligation of contracts between two individuals, but as excluding from that inhibition contracts made with itself? The words themselves contain no such distinction. They are general, and are applicable to contracts of every description. If contracts made with the

State are to be exempted from their operations, the exception must arise from the character of the contracting party, not from the words which are employed." And the court proceed to give reasons for their decision, that violence should not "be done to the natural meaning of words, for the purpose of leaving to the legislature the power of seizing, for public use, the estate of an individual, in the form of a law annulling the title by which he holds that estate."¹

It will be seen that this leading decision settles two important points: first, that an executed contract is within the provision, and second, that it protects from violation the contracts of States equally with those entered into between private individuals.²

¹ Fletcher v. Peck, 6 Cranch, 133.

² This decision has been repeatedly followed. In the founding of the Colony of Virginia, the religious establishment of England was adopted, and before the Revolution the churches of

that denomination had become vested, by grants of the Crown or Colony, with large properties, which continued in their possession after the constitution of the State had forbidden the creation or continuance of any

And it has since been held that compacts between two States are in like manner protected.¹ These decisions, however, do not fully *determine what under all circumstances is to [* 276] be regarded as a contract. A grant of land by a State is a contract, because in making it the State deals with the purchaser precisely as any other vendor might; and if its mode of conveyance is any different, it is only because by virtue of its sovereignty, it has power to convey by other modes than those which the general law opens to private individuals. But many things done by the State may seem to hold out promises to individuals, which

religious establishment, possessed of exclusive rights or privileges, or the compelling the citizens to worship under a stipulated form or discipline, or to pay taxes to those whose creed they could not conscientiously believe. By statute in 1801, the legislature asserted their right to all the property of the Episcopal churches in the respective parishes of the State; and, among other things, directed and authorized the overseers of the poor and their successors in each parish, wherein any glebe land was vacant or should become so, to sell the same and appropriate the proceeds to the use of the poor of the parish. By this act, it will be seen, the State sought in effect to resume grants made by the sovereignty, — a practice which had been common enough in English history, and of which precedents were not wanting in the history of the American Colonies. The Supreme Court of the United States held the grant not revocable, and that the legislative act was therefore unconstitutional and void. *Territt v. Taylor*, 9 Cranch, 43. See also *Town of Pawlet v. Clark*, 9 Cranch, 335; *People v. Platt*, 17 Johns. 195; *Montgomery v. Kasson*, 16 Cal. 189; *Grogan v. San Francisco*, 18 Cal. 590; *Rehoboth v. Hunt*, 1 Pick. 224; *Lowry v. Francis*, 2 Yerg. 534; *University of North Carolina v. Foy*, 2 Hayw. 310; *State v. Barker*,

4 Kan. 379 and 435. The lien of a bondholder, who has loaned money to the State on a pledge of property by legislative act, cannot be divested or postponed by a subsequent legislative act. *Wabash, &c. Co. v. Beers*, 2 Black, 448.

¹ On the separation of Kentucky from Virginia, a compact was entered into between the proposed new and the old State, by which it was agreed “that all private grants and interests of lands, within the said district, derived from the laws of Virginia, shall remain valid and secure under the laws of the proposed State, and shall be determined by the laws now existing in this State.” After the admission of the new State to the Union, “occupying claimant” laws were passed by its legislature, such as were not in existence in Virginia, and by the force of which, under certain circumstances, the owner might be deprived of his title to land, unless he would pay the value of lasting improvements made upon it by an adverse claimant. These acts were also held void; the compact was held inviolable under the Constitution, and it was deemed no objection to its binding character, that its effect was to restrict, in some directions, the legislative power of the State entering into it. *Green v. Biddle*, 8 Wheat. 1. See also *Hawkins v. Barney’s Lessee*, 5 Pet. 457.

after all cannot be treated as contracts without hampering the legislative power of the State in a manner that would soon leave it without the means of performing its essential functions. The State creates offices, and appoints persons to fill them; it establishes municipal corporations with large and valuable privileges for its citizens; by its general laws it holds out inducements to immigration; it passes exemption laws, and laws for the encouragement of trade and agriculture; and under all these laws a greater or less number of citizens expect to derive profit and emolument. But can these laws be regarded as contracts between the State and the officers and corporations who are, or the citizens of the State who expect to be, benefited by their passage, so as to preclude their being repealed?

On these points it would seem that there could be no difficulty. When the State employs officers or creates municipal corporations as the mere agencies of government, it must have the power to discontinue the agency whenever it comes to be regarded as no longer important. "The framers of the Constitution did not intend to restrain the States in the regulation of their civil institutions, adopted for internal government."¹ They may, therefore, discontinue offices and abolish or change the organization of municipal corporations at any time, according to the existing legislative view of state policy, unless forbidden by their own [* 277] constitutions from doing so.² And * although municipal

¹ *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 Wheat. 629, per *Marshall*, Ch. J.

² *Butler v. Pennsylvania*, 10 How. 402; *Warner v. People*, 2 Denio, 272; *Conner v. New York*, 2 Sandf. 355, and 5 N. Y. 285; *People v. Green*, 58 N. Y. 295; *State v. Van Baum- bach*, 12 Wis. 310; *Coffin v. State*, 7 Ind. 157; *Benford v. Gibson*, 15 Ala. 521; *Perkins v. Corbin*, 45 Ala. 103; *Evans v. Populus*, 22 La. Ann. 121; *Commonwealth v. Bacon*, 6 S. & R. 322; *Commonwealth v. Mann*, 5 W. & S. 403, 418; *Koontz v. Franklin Co.*, 76 Penn. St. 154; *French v. Commonwealth*, 78 Penn. St. 339; *Augusta v. Sweeney*, 44 Geo. 463; *County Commissioners v. Jones*, 18 Minn. 199; *People v. Lippincott*, 67 Ill. 333; *In*

re Bulger, 45 Cal. 553; *Opinions of Justices*, 117 Mass. 603; *Kendall v. Canton*, 53 Miss. 526; *Williams v. Newport*, 12 Bush, 438; *State v. Douglass*, 26 Wis. 428; *Robinson v. White*, 26 Ark. 139; *Alexander v. McKenzie*, 2 S. C. n. s. 81. Compare *People v. Bull*, 46 N. Y. 57; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 302. "Where an office is created by statute, it is wholly within the control of the legislature. The term, the mode of appointment, and the compensation may be altered at pleasure, and the latter may be even taken away without abolishing the office. Such extreme legislation is not to be deemed probable in any case. But we are now discussing the legislative power, not its expediency or propriety. Having the power, the

corporations, as respects the property which they hold, control, and manage, for the benefit of their citizens, are governed by the same rules and subject to the same liabilities as individuals, yet this property, so far as it has been derived from the State, or obtained by the exercise of the ordinary powers of government, must be held subject to control by the State, but under the restriction only, that it is not to be appropriated to uses for-

legislature will exercise it for the public good, and it is the sole judge of the exigency which demands its interference." Per *Sandford*, J., 2 Sandf. 369. "The selection of officers who are nothing more than public agents for the effectuating of public purposes is matter of public convenience or necessity, and so, too, are the periods for the appointment of such agents; but neither the one nor the other of these arrangements can constitute any obligation to continue such agents, or to reappoint them, after the measures which brought them into being shall have been found useless, shall have been fulfilled, or shall have been abrogated as even detrimental to the well-being of the public. The promised compensation for services actually performed and accepted, during the continuance of the particular agency, may undoubtedly be claimed, both upon principles of compact and of equity; but to insist beyond this upon the perpetuation of a public policy either useless or detrimental, and upon a reward for acts neither desired nor performed, would appear to be reconcilable with neither common justice nor common sense." *Daniel*, J., in 10 How. 416. See also *Barker v. Pittsburgh*, 4 Penn. St. 49; *Standiford v. Wingate*, 2 Duv. 443; *Taft v. Adams*, 3 Gray, 126; *Walker v. Peelle*, 18 Ind. 264; *People v. Haskell*, 5 Cal. 357; *Dart v. Houston*, 22 Geo. 506; *Williams v. Newport*, 12 Bush, 438; *Territory v. Pyle*,

1 Oregon, 149; *Bryan v. Cattell*, 15 Iowa, 538. But if the term of an office is fixed by the Constitution, the legislature cannot remove the officer, — except as that instrument may allow, — either directly, or indirectly by abolishing the office. *People v. Dubois*, 23 Ill. 547; *State v. Messmore*, 14 Wis. 163; *Commonwealth v. Gamble*, 62 Penn. St. 343; s. c. 1 Am. Rep. 422; *Lowe v. Commonwealth*, 3 Met. (Ky.) 240; *State v. Wiltz*, 11 La. Ann. 489; *Goodin v. Thoman*, 10 Kan. 191; *State v. Draper*, 50 Mo. 353. Compare *Christy v. Commissioners*, 39 Cal. 3. Nor can the legislature take from a constitutional officer a portion of the characteristic duties belonging to the office, and devolve them upon an office of its own creation. *State v. Brunst*, 26 Wis. 413; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 84, disapproving *State v. Dews*, R. M. Charl. 397. Compare *People v. Raymond*, 37 N. Y. 428; *King v. Hunder*, 65 N. C. 603; s. c. 6 Am. Rep. 754. Nor, where the office is elective, can the legislature fill it, either directly, or by extending the term of the incumbent. *People v. Bull*, 46 N. Y. 57; *People v. McKinney*, 52 N. Y. 374; *ante*, p. *64, note. Compare *People v. Flanagan*, 66 N. Y. 237. As to control of municipal corporations, see further *Marietta v. Fearing*, 4 Ohio, 427; *Bradford v. Cary*, 5 Greenl. 339; *Bush v. Shipman*, 4 Scam. 186; *Trustees, c. v. Tatman*, 13 Ill. 27; *People v. Morris*, 13 Wend. 325; *Mills v. Williams*, 11 Ired. 558; *People v. Banvard*, 27 Cal. 470; *ante*, ch. viii.

eign to those for which it has been acquired. And the franchises conferred upon such a corporation, for the benefit of its citizens, must be liable to be resumed at any time by that authority which may mould the corporate powers at its will, or even revoke them altogether. The greater power will comprehend the less.¹ If,

¹ In *East Hartford v. Hartford Bridge Co.*, 10 How. 533, Mr. Justice *Woodbury*, in speaking of the grant of a ferry franchise to a municipal corporation, says: "Our opinion is . . . that the parties to this grant did not by their charter stand in the attitude towards each other of making a contract by it, such as is contemplated by the Constitution, and as could not be modified by subsequent legislation. The legislature was acting here on the one part, and public municipal and political corporations on the other. They were acting, too, in relation to a public object, being virtually a highway across the river, over another highway up and down the river. From this standing and relation of these parties, and from the subject-matter of their action, we think that the doings of the legislature as to this ferry must be considered rather as public laws than as contracts. They related to public interests. They changed as those interests demanded. The grantees, likewise the towns, being mere organizations for public purposes, were liable to have their public powers, rights, and duties, modified or abolished at any moment by the legislature. They are incorporated for public, and not private, objects. They are allowed to hold privileges or property only for public purposes. The members are not shareholders nor joint partners in any corporate estate which they can sell or devise to others, or which can be attached and levied on for their debts. Hence, generally, the doings between them and the legislature are in the nature of legislation rather than com-

pact, and subject to all the legislative conditions just named, and therefore to be considered not violated by subsequent legislative changes. It is hardly possible to conceive the grounds on which a different result could be vindicated, without destroying all legislative sovereignty, and checking most legislative improvements, as well as supervision over its subordinate public bodies." A different doctrine was advanced by Mr. Justice *Barculo*, in *Benson v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 10 Barb. 234, who cites in support of his opinion — that ferry grants to the city of New York could not be taken away by the legislature — what is said by Chancellor *Kent* (2 *Kent's Com.* 275), that "public corporations . . . may be empowered to take and hold private property for municipal uses; and such property is invested with the security of other private rights. So corporate franchises attached to public corporations are legal estates, coupled with an interest, and are protected as private property." This is true in a general sense, and it is also true that, in respect to such property and franchises, the same rules of responsibility are to be applied as in the case of individuals. *Bailey v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 3 Hill, 531. But it does not follow that the legislature, under its power to administer the government, of which these agencies are a part, and for the purposes for which the grant has been made, may not at any time modify the municipal powers and privileges, by transferring the grant to some other agency, or revoking it when it seems to have become unim-

however, a grant is made to a municipal corporation *charged with a trust in favor of an individual, private [* 278] corporation, *or charity, the interest which the *cestui* [* 279] *que trust* has under the grant may sustain it against legislative revocation; a vested equitable interest being property in the same sense and entitled to the same protection as a legal.¹

Those charters of incorporation, however, which are granted, not as a part of the machinery of the government, but for the private benefit or purposes of the corporators, stand upon a

portant. In *People v. Power*, 25 Ill. 190, *Breese*, J., in speaking of a law which provided that three-fourths of the taxes collected in the county of Sangamon, with certain deductions, should be paid over to the city of Springfield, which is situated therein, says: "While private corporations are regarded as contracts which the legislature cannot constitutionally impair, as the trustee of the public interests it has the exclusive and unrestrained control over public corporations; and as it may create, so it may modify or destroy, as public exigency requires or the public interests demand. *Coles v. Madison County*, *Breese*, 115. Their whole capacities, powers, and duties are derived from the legislature, and subordinate to that power. If, then, the legislature can destroy a county, they can destroy any of its parts, and take from it any one of its powers. The revenues of a county are not the property of the county, in the sense in which revenue of a private person or corporation is regarded. The whole State has an interest in the revenue of a county; and for the public good the legislature must have the power to direct its application. The power conferred upon a county to raise a revenue by taxation is a political power, and its application when collected must necessarily be within the control of the legislature for political purposes. The act

of the legislature nowhere proposes to take from the county of Sangamon, and give to the city of Springfield, any property belonging to the county, or revenues collected for the use of the county. *But, if it did, it would not be objectionable.* But, on the contrary, it proposes alone to appropriate the revenue which may be collected by the county, by taxes levied on property both in the city and county, in certain proportions ratably to the city and county." And see *Bush v. Shipman*, 5 Ill. 190; *Richland County v. Lawrence County*, 12 Ill. 1; *Sangamon Co. v. Springfield*, 63 Ill. 66; *Borough of Dunmore's Appeal*, 52 Penn. St. 374; *Guilford v. Supervisors of Chenango*, 18 Barb. 615, and 13 N. Y. 143; *ante*, pp. *235-*239, and cases cited.

¹ See *Town of Pawlet v. Clark*, 9 Cranch, 292, and *Terrett v. Taylor*, 9 Cranch, 43. The municipal corporation holding property or rights in trust might even be abolished without affecting the grant; but the Court of Chancery might be empowered to appoint a new trustee to take charge of the property, and to execute the trust. *Montpelier v. East Montpelier*, 29 Vt. 12. It is held in *People v. Ingersoll*, 58 N. Y. 1, that the franchise to levy taxes by a county for county purposes was not exercised by the county as agent for the State, but as principal.

different footing, and are held to be contracts between the legislature and the corporators, having for their consideration the liabilities and duties which the corporators assume by accepting them; and the grant of the franchise can no more be resumed by the legislature, or its benefits diminished or impaired without the consent of the grantees, than any other grant of property or valuable thing, unless the right to do so is reserved in the charter itself.¹

¹ *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, 4 Wheat. 519; *Trustees of Vincennes University v. Indiana*, 14 How. 268; *Planters' Bank v. Sharp*, 6 How. 301; *Piqua Bank v. Knoop*, 16 How. 369; *Binghamton Bridge Case*, 3 Wall. 51; *Norris v. Trustees of Abingdon Academy*, 7 G. & J. 7; *Grammar School v. Burt*, 11 Vt. 682; *Brown v. Hummel*, 6 Penn. St. 86; *State v. Heyward*, 3 Rich. 389; *People v. Manhattan Co.*, 9 Wend. 351; *Commonwealth v. Cullen*, 13 Penn. St. 133; *Commercial Bank of Natchez v. State*, 14 Miss. 599; *Backus v. Lebanon*, 11 N. H. 19; *Michigan State Bank v. Hastings*, 1 Doug. (Mich.) 225; *Bridge Co. v. Hoboken Co.*, 2 Beas. 81; *Miners' Bank v. United States*, 1 Greene (Iowa), 553; *Edwards v. Jagers*, 19 Ind. 407; *State v. Noyes*, 47 Me. 189; *Bruffet v. G. W. R. R. Co.*, 25 Ill. 353; *People v. Jackson and Michigan Plank Road Co.*, 9 Mich. 285; *Bank of the State v. Bank of Cape Fear*, 13 Ired. 75; *Mills v. Williams*, 11 Ired. 558; *Hawthorne v. Calef*, 2 Wall. 10; *Wales v. Stetson*, 2 Mass. 146; *Nichols v. Bertram*, 3 Pick. 342; *King v. Dedham Bank*, 15 Mass. 447; *State v. Tombeckbee Bank*, 2 Stew. 30; *Central Bridge v. Lowell*, 15 Gray, 106; *Bank of the Dominion v. McVeigh*, 20 Grat. 457; *Sloan v. Pacific R. R. Co.*, 61 Mo. 24; *State v. Richmond, &c. R. R. Co.*, 73 N. C. 527. The mere passage of an act of incorporation, however, does not make the contract; and it may be repealed prior to a full accept-

ance by the corporators. *Mississippi Society v. Musgrove*, 44 Miss. 820; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 723. It is under the protection of the decision in the *Dartmouth College Case* that the most enormous and threatening powers in our country have been created; some of the great and wealthy corporations actually having greater influence in the country at large, and upon the legislation of the country, than the States to which they owe their corporate existence. Every privilege granted or right conferred—no matter by what means or on what pretence—being made inviolable by the Constitution, the government is frequently found stripped of its authority in very important particulars, by unwise, careless, or corrupt legislation; and a clause of the federal Constitution, whose purpose was to preclude the repudiation of debts and just contracts, protects and perpetuates the evil. To guard against such calamities in the future, it is customary now for the people in framing their constitutions to forbid the granting of corporate powers, except subject to amendment and repeal; but the improvident grants of an early day are beyond their reach. On the general subject of the power of the legislature, under its right reserved, to alter, amend, and repeal, see *Worcester v. Norwich, &c. R. R. Co.*, 109 Mass. 103, and cases cited; *Ames v. Lake Superior R. R. Co.*, 21 Minn. 241; *Railroad Commissioners v. Portland, &c. R. R. Co.*, 63 Me. 269; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 208; *Rodemacher v.*

* Perhaps the most interesting question which arises in [* 280] this discussion is, whether it is competent for the legislature to so bind up its own hands by a grant as to preclude it from exercising for the future any of the essential attributes of sovereignty in regard to any of the subjects within its jurisdiction ; whether, for instance, it can agree that it will not exercise the power of taxation, or the police power of the State, or the right of eminent domain, as to certain specified property or persons ; and whether, if it shall undertake to do so, the agreement is not void on the general principle, that the legislature cannot diminish the power of its successors by irrepealable legislation, and that any other rule might cripple and eventually destroy the government itself. If the legislature has power to do this, it is certainly a very dangerous power, exceedingly liable to abuse, and may possibly come in time to make the constitutional provision in question as prolific of evil as it ever has been, or is likely to be, of good.

So far as the power of taxation is concerned, it has been so

Milwaukee, &c. R. R. Co., 41 Iowa, 297 ; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 592 ; *Gorman v. Pacific R. R. Co.*, 26 Mo. 441 ; *Railroad Commissioners v. Portland, &c. R. R. Co.*, 63 Me. 269 ; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 208 ; *Gardner v. Hope Ins. Co.*, 9 R. I. 194 ; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 238.

And as to the right to regulate charges for transportation of persons and property, see *Parker v. Metropolitan R. R. Co.*, 109 Mass. 506 ; *Attorney-General v. Railroad Companies*, 35 Wis. 425 ; *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Iowa*, 94 U. S. Rep. 155.

In *Mills v. Williams*, 11 Ired. 561, *Pearson, J.*, states the difference between the acts of incorporation of public and private corporations as follows : " The substantial distinction is this : Some corporations are created by the mere will of the legislature, there being no other party interested or concerned. To this party a portion of the power of the legislature is delegated, to be exercised for the general good, and

subject at all times to be modified, changed, or annulled. Other corporations are the result of contract. The legislature is not the only party interested ; for, although it has a public purpose to be accomplished, it chooses to do it by the instrumentality of a second party. These two parties make a contract. The legislature, for and in consideration of certain labor and outlay of money, confers upon the party of the second part the privilege of being a corporation, with certain powers and capacities. The expectation of benefit to the public is the moving consideration on one side ; that of expected remuneration for the outlay is the consideration on the other. It is a *contract*, and therefore cannot be modified, changed, or annulled, without the consent of both parties." An incorporated academy, whose endowment comes exclusively from the public, is a public corporation. *Dart v. Houston*, 22 Geo. 506. Compare *State v. Adams*, 44 Mo. 570.

often decided by the Supreme Court of the United States, though not without remonstrance on the part of State courts,¹ that an agreement by a State, for a consideration received or supposed to be received, that certain property, rights, or franchises shall be exempt from taxation, or be taxed only at a certain [* 281] * agreed rate, is a contract protected by the Constitution, that the question can no longer be considered an open one.² In any case, however, there must be a consideration, so that the State can be supposed to have received a beneficial equivalent; for it is conceded on all sides that, if the exemption is made as a privilege only, it may be revoked at any time.³ And

¹ *Mechanics' and Traders' Bank v. Debolt*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 591; *Toledo Bank v. Bond*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 622; *Knoop v. Piqua Bank*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 603; *Milan and R. Plank Road Co. v. Husted*, 3 Ohio, n. s. 578; *Piscataqua Bridge v. N. H. Bridge*, 7 N. H. 69; *Brewster v. Hough*, 10 N. H. 143; *Backus v. Lebanon*, 11 N. H. 24; *Thorpe v. R. & B. R. R. Co.*, 27 Vt. 140; *Brainard v. Colchester*, 31 Conn. 410; *Mott v. Pennsylvania R. R. Co.*, 30 Penn. St. 9; *East Saginaw Salt Manuf. Co. v. East Saginaw*, 19 Mich. 259; *West Wis. R. Co. v. Supervisor of Trempeleau Co.*, 35 Wis. 257, 265; *Attorney-General v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 35 Wis. 425, 572. See also the dissenting opinion of Mr. Justice *Miller*, in *Washington University v. Rouse*, 8 Wall. 441, in which the Chief Justice and Justice *Field* concurred. Also, *Raleigh, &c. R. R. Co. v. Reid*, 64 N. C. 155.

² *New Jersey v. Wilson*, 7 Cranch, 164; *Gordon v. Appeal Tax Court*, 3 How. 133; *Piqua Bank v. Knoop*, 16 How. 369; *Ohio Life and Trust Co. v. Debolt*, 16 How. 416; *Dodge v. Woolsey*, 18 How. 331; *Mechanics' and Traders' Bank v. Debolt*, 18 How. 380; *Mechanics' and Traders' Bank v. Thomas*, 18 How. 384; *McGee v. Mathis*, 4 Wall. 143; *Home of the Friendless v. Rouse*, 8 Wall. 430; *Washington University v. Rouse*, 8 Wall. 431; *Wilmington R. R. Co. v.*

Reid, 13 Wall. 264; *Raleigh and Gaston R. R. Co. v. Reid*, 13 Wall. 269; *Humphrey v. Peques*, 16 Wall. 244; *Pacific R. R. Co. v. Maguire*, 20 Wall. 36. See also *Atwater v. Woodbridge*, 6 Conn. 223; *Osborne v. Humphrey*, 7 Conn. 335; *Parker v. Redfield*, 10 Conn. 495; *Landon v. Litchfield*, 11 Conn. 251; *Herrick v. Randolph*, 13 Vt. 525; *Armington v. Barnet*, 15 Vt. 751; *O'Donnell v. Bailey*, 24 Miss. 386; *St. Paul, &c. R. R. Co. v. Parcher*, 14 Minn. 297; *Grand Gulf R. R. Co. v. Buck*, 53 Miss. 246; *Central R. R. Co. v. State*, 54 Geo. 401; *St. Louis, &c. R. R. Co. v. Lofton*, 30 Ark. 693.

³ *Christ's Church v. Philadelphia*, 24 How. 300; *Brainard v. Colchester*, 31 Conn. 410. See also *Commonwealth v. Bird*, 12 Mass. 442; *Dole v. The Governor*, 3 Stew. 387. If an exemption from taxation exists in any case, it must be the result of a deliberate intention to relinquish this prerogative of sovereignty, distinctly manifested. *Easton Bank v. Commonwealth*, 10 Penn. St. 450; *Providence Bank v. Billings*, 4 Pet. 561; *Christ Church v. Philadelphia*, 24 How. 302; *Gilman v. Sheboygan*, 2 Black, 513; *Herrick v. Randolph*, 13 Vt. 531; *East Saginaw Salt Manuf. Co. v. East Saginaw*, 19 Mich. 259; s. c. 13 Wall. 373; *People v. Roper*, 25 N. Y. 629; *People v. Commissioners of Taxes*, 47 N. Y. 501; *Lord*

it is but reasonable that the exemption be construed with strictness.¹

The power of the legislature to preclude itself in any case from exercising the power of eminent domain is not so plainly decided. It must be conceded, under the authorities, that the State may grant exclusive franchises, — like the right to construct the only railroad which shall be built between certain termini; or the only bridge which shall be permitted over a river between specified limits; or to own the only ferry which shall be allowed at a certain point,² — but the grant of an exclusive privilege will not prevent the legislature from exercising the power of eminent domain in respect thereto. Franchises, like every other thing of value, and in the nature of property, within the State, are subject to this power; and any of their incidents may be taken away, or themselves altogether annihilated, by means of its exercise.³ And it is believed that an express agreement in the charter, that the power of eminent domain should not be so exercised as to impair or affect the franchise granted, if not void as an agreement beyond the power of the legislature to make, must be considered as only a valuable portion of the privilege secured by the grant, and as such liable to be appropriated under the power of eminent domain. The exclusiveness * of the grant, and [* 282] the agreement against interference with it, if valid, constitute elements in its value to be taken into account in assessing compensation; but appropriating the franchise in such a case no more violates the obligation of the contract than does the appropriation of land which the State has granted under an express or implied agreement for quiet enjoyment by the grantee, but which

v. Litchfield, 36 Conn. 116; s. c. 4 Am. Rep. 41; *Erie Railway Co. v. Commonwealth*, 66 Penn. St. 84; s. c. 5 Am. Rep. 351; *Bradley v. McAtee*, 7 Bush, 667; s. c. 3 Am. Rep. 309; *North Missouri R. R. Co. v. Maguire*, 49 Mo. 490; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 141; *Illinois Cent. R. R. Co. v. Irvin*, 72 Ill. 452.

¹ See Cooley on Taxation, 146, and cases cited.

² *West River Bridge Co. v. Dix*, 16 Vt. 446, and 6 How. 507; *Binghamton Bridge Case*, 3 Wall. 51;

Shorter v. Smith, 9 Geo. 529; *Piscataqua Bridge v. N. H. Bridge*, 7 N. H. 35; *Boston Water Power Co. v. Boston and Worcester R. R. Co.*, 23 Pick. 360; *Boston and Lowell R. R. v. Salem and Lowell R. R.*, 2 Gray, 9; *Costar v. Brush*, 25 Wend. 628; *California Telegraph Co. v. Alta Telegraph Co.*, 22 Cal. 398.

³ *Matter of Kerr*, 42 Barb. 119; *Enfield Toll Bridge Co. v. Hartford and N. H. R. R. Co.*, 17 Conn. 40, 454; *West River Bridge Co. v. Dix*, 16 Vt. 446, and 6 How. 507.

nevertheless may be taken when the public need requires.¹ All grants are subject to this implied condition; and it may well be worthy of inquiry, whether the agreement that a franchise granted shall not afterwards be appropriated can have any other or greater force than words which would make it an exclusive franchise, but which, notwithstanding, would not preclude a subsequent grant on making compensation.² The words of the grant are as much in the way of the grant of a conflicting franchise in the one case as in the other.

¹ *Alabama, &c. R. R. Co. v. Kenney*, 39 Ala. 307; *Baltimore, &c. Turnpike Co. v. Union R. R. Co.*, 35 Md. 224; *Eastern R. R. Co. v. Boston, &c. R. R. Co.*, 111 Mass. 125; s. c. 15 Am. Rep. 13. That property has been acquired by a corporation under the right of eminent domain is no reason against a further appropriation. *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Lake*, 71 Ill. 333; *Peoria, &c. R. R. Co. v. Peoria, &c. Co.*, 66 Ill. 174; *N. Y. Central, &c. R. R. Co. v. Gas Light Co.*, 63 N. Y. 326; *Eastern R. R. Co. v. Boston, &c. R. R. Co.*, 111 Mass. 125.

² Mr. Greenleaf, in a note to his edition of *Cruise on Real Property*, Vol. II. p. 67, says upon this subject: "In regard to the position that the grant of the franchise of a ferry, bridge, turnpike, or railroad, is in its nature exclusive, so that the State cannot interfere with it by the creation of another similar franchise, tending materially to impair its value, it is with great deference submitted that an important distinction should be observed between those powers of government which are essential attributes of sovereignty, indispensable to be always preserved in full vigor, such as the power to create revenues for the public purposes, to provide for the common defence, to provide safe and convenient ways for the public necessity and convenience, and to take private property for public uses, and the like, and those powers which are not thus essential, such as the power to alienate the lands and other prop-

erty of the State, and to make contracts of service, and of purchase and sale, or the like. Powers of the former class are essential to the constitution of society, as without them no political community can well exist; and necessity requires that they should continue unimpaired. They are intrusted to the legislature to be exercised, not to be bartered away; and it is indispensable that each legislature should assemble with the same measure of sovereign power which was held by its predecessors. Any act of the legislature disabling itself from the future exercise of powers intrusted to it for the public good must be void, being in effect a covenant to desert its paramount duty to the whole people. It is therefore deemed not competent for a legislature to covenant that it will not, under any circumstances, open another avenue for the public travel within certain limits, or in a certain term of time; such covenant being an alienation of sovereign powers, and a violation of public duty." See also *Redfield on Railways* (3d ed.), Vol. I. p. 258. That the intention to relinquish the right of eminent domain is not to be presumed in any legislative grant, see *People v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 32 Barb. 113; *Illinois and Michigan Canal v. Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Co.*, 14 Ill. 321; *Eastern R. R. Co. v. Boston, &c. R. R. Co.*, 111 Mass. 125; s. c. 15 Am. Rep. 13; *Turnpike Co. v. Union R. R. Co.*, 35 Md. 324.

It has also been intimated in a very able opinion that the *police power of the State could not be alienated [* 283] even by express grant.¹ And this opinion is supported by those cases where it has been held that licenses to make use of property in certain modes may be revoked by the State, notwithstanding they may be connected with grants and based upon a consideration.² But this subject we shall recur to hereafter.

It would seem, therefore, to be the prevailing opinion, and one

¹ "We think the power of the legislature to control existing railways in this respect may be found in the general control over the police of the country, which resides in the law-making power in all free States, and which is, by the fifth article of the Bill of Rights in this State, expressly declared to reside perpetually and inalienably in the legislature, which is, perhaps, no more than the enunciation of a general principle applicable to all free States; and which cannot therefore be violated so as to deprive the legislature of the power, even by express grant, to any mere public or private corporation. And when the regulation of the police of a city or town, by general ordinances, is given to such cities or towns, and the regulation of their own internal police is given to railroads, to be carried into effect by their by-laws and other regulations, it is, of course, always, in all such cases, subject to the superior control of the legislature. That is a responsibility which legislatures cannot divest themselves of, if they would." *Thorpe v. R. & B. R. R. Co.*, 27 Vt. 149, per *Redfield*, Ch. J. See also *Indianapolis, &c. R. R. Co. v. Kercheval*, 16 Ind. 84; *Ohio, &c. R. R. Co. v. M'Clelland*, 25 Ill. 140. See *State v. Noyes*, 47 Me. 189, on the same subject. In *Bradley v. McAtee*, 7 Bush, 367; s. c. 3 Am. Rep. 309, it was decided that a provision in a city charter that, after the first improvement of a street, repairs should be made at the expense of the city, was not a contract; and on its repeal

a lot owner, who had paid for the improvement, might have his lot assessed for the repairs. Compare *Hammett v. Philadelphia*, 65 Penn. St. 146; s. c. 3 Am. Rep. 615.

² See, upon this subject, *Brick Presbyterian Church v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 5 Cow. 538; *Vanderbilt v. Adams*, 7 Cow. 349; *State v. Sterling*, 8 Mo. 697; *Hirn v. State*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 15; *Calder v. Kurby*, 5 Gray, 597; *Brimmer v. Boston*, 102 Mass. 19. Whether a State, after granting licenses to sell liquors, for which a fee is received, can revoke them by a general law forbidding sales, is in dispute upon the authorities. See *Freleigh v. State*, 8 Mo. 606; *State v. Sterling*, 8 Mo. 697; *Calder v. Kurby*, 5 Gray, 597; *Metropolitan Board of Excise v. Barrie*, 34 N. Y. 657; *Baltimore v. Clunet*, 23 Md. 449; *Fell v. State*, 42 Md. 71; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 83; and *Commonwealth v. Brennan*, 103 Mass. 70, which hold that it may: and *State v. Phalen*, 3 Harr. 441; *Adams v. Hackett*, 7 Fost. 294; and *Boyd v. State*, 36 Ala. 329, which are *contra*. See also *State v. Hawthorn*, 9 Mo. 389. If it has the power, it would seem an act of bad faith to exercise it, without refunding the money received for the license. *Hirn v. State*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 21. That the State cannot irrevocably hamper itself in the exercise of the police power, see *Toledo, &c. R. R. Co. v. Jacksonville*, 67 Ill. 37. As to the general power of the legislature to take away licenses, see *People v. Commissioners*, 59 N. Y. 92.

based upon sound reason, that the State cannot barter away, or in any manner abridge or weaken, any of those essential powers which are inherent in all governments, and the existence of which in full vigor is important to the well-being of organized society ; and that any contracts to that end, being without validity, cannot be enforced because of any supposed conflict with the provision of the national Constitution now under consideration. If the tax cases are to be regarded as an exception to this statement, the exception is perhaps to be considered a nominal rather than a real one, since taxation is for the purpose of providing the State a revenue, and the State laws which have been enforced as contracts in these cases have been supposed to be based [* 284] upon consideration, * by which the State receives the benefit which would have accrued from an exercise of the relinquished power in the ordinary mode.

Exclusive Privileges. Under the rulings of the federal Supreme Court, the grant of any exclusive privilege by a State, if lawfully made, is a contract, and not subject to be recalled.¹ As every exclusive privilege is in the nature of a monopoly, it may at some time become a question of interest, whether there are any, and if so what, limits to the power of the State to grant them. In former times, such grants were a favorite resort in England, not only to raise money for the personal uses of the monarch, but to reward favorites ; and the abuse grew to such enormous magnitude that Parliament in the time of Elizabeth, and again in the time of James I., interfered and prohibited them. What is more important to us is, that in 1602 they were judicially declared to be illegal.² These, however, were monopolies in the ordinary occupations of life ; and the decision upon them would not affect the special privileges most commonly granted. Where the grant is of a franchise which would not otherwise exist, no question can be made of the right of the State to make it exclusive, unless the constitution of the State forbids it ; because, in contemplation of law, no one is wronged when he is only excluded from that to which he never had any right. An exclusive right to build and maintain a toll bridge, or to set up a ferry, may therefore be granted ; and the State may doubtless limit, by the requirement of a license, the number of persons who shall be allowed to

¹ *Ante*, p. *281, and cases cited ; *Slaughter-House Cases*, 16 Wall. 36, 74.

² *Darcy v. Allain*, 11 Rep. 84.

engage in employments the entering upon which is not a matter of common right, and which, because of their liability to abuse, may require special and extraordinary police supervision. The business of selling intoxicating drinks and of setting up a lottery are illustrations of such employments.] But the grant of a monopoly in one of the ordinary and necessary avocations of life must be as clearly illegal in this country as in England; and it would be impossible to defend and sustain it, except upon the broad ground that the legislature may control and regulate the ordinary avocations of life, even to the extent of fixing the prices of labor and of commodities.] As no one pretends that the legislature possesses such a power, and as its existence would be wholly inconsistent with regulated liberty, it must follow that lawful grants of special privileges must be confined to cases where they will take from citizens, generally, nothing which before pertained to them as of common right.¹

Changes in the General Laws. We have said in another place that citizens have no vested right in the existing general laws of the State which can preclude their amendment or repeal, and that there is no implied promise on the part of the State to protect its citizens against incidental injury occasioned by changes in the law. Nevertheless there may be laws which amount to propositions on the part of the State, which, if accepted by individuals, will become binding contracts. Of this class are perhaps to be considered bounty laws, by which the State promises the payment of a gratuity to any one who will do any particular act supposed to be for the State interest. Unquestionably the State may repeal such a law at any time;² but, when the proposition has been accepted by the performance of the act before the law is repealed, the contract would seem to be complete, and the promised gratuity becomes a legal debt.³ And where a State was owner of the stock of a bank, and by the law its bills and notes were to be received in payment of all debts due to the State, it

¹ In *Live Stock, &c. Association v. Crescent City, &c. Co.*, commonly known as the Slaughter-House Case, 16 Wall. 36, the grant of an exclusive privilege in slaughtering cattle in the vicinity of New Orleans was upheld as an exercise of the police power.

² *Christ Church v. Philadelphia,*

24 How. 300; *East Saginaw Salt Manuf. Co. v. East Saginaw*, 19 Mich. 259; s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 82, and 13 Wall. 873.

³ *People v. Auditor-General*, 9 Mich. 327. See *Montgomery v. Kason*, 16 Cal. 189; *Adams v. Palmer*, 51 Me. 480.

was properly held that this law constituted a contract with those who should receive the bills before its repeal, and that a repeal of the law could not deprive these holders of the right which it assured. Such a law, with the acceptance of the bills under it, “comes within the definition of a contract. It is a contract founded upon a good and valuable consideration, — a consideration beneficial to the State; as its profits are increased by sustaining the credit, and consequently extending the circulation, of the paper of the bank.”¹

That laws permitting the dissolution of the contract of marriage are not within the intention of the clause of the Constitution under discussion, seems to be the prevailing opinion.² It has been intimated, however, that, so far as property rights are concerned, the contract must stand on the same footing as any other, and that a law passed after the marriage, vesting the property in

the wife for her sole use, would be void, as impairing [* 285] the obligation of contracts.³ * But certainly there is no

such contract embraced in the marriage as would prevent the legislature changing the law, and vesting in the wife solely all property which she should acquire thereafter; and, if the property had already become vested in the husband, it would be protected in him, against legislative transfer to the wife, on other grounds than the one here indicated.

“*The obligation of a contract,*” it is said, “consists in its binding force on the party who makes it. This depends upon the laws in existence when it is made; these are necessarily referred to in all contracts, and forming a part of them as the measure of the obligation to perform them by the one party, and the right acquired by the other. There can be no other standard by which to ascertain the extent of either, than that which the terms of the contract indicate, according to their settled legal meaning; when it becomes consummated, the law defines the duty and the right, compels one party to perform the thing contracted for, and gives the other a right to enforce the performance by the remedies then in force. If any subsequent law affect to diminish the duty,

¹ Woodruff v. Trapnall, 10 How. 190. See Winter v. Jones, 10 Geo. 190; Furman v. Nichol, 8 Wall. 44; Antoni v. Wright, 22 Grat. 833.

² Per Marshall, Ch. J., Dartmouth College v. Woodward, 4 Wheat. 629;

Maguire v. Maguire, 7 Dana, 183; Clark v. Clark, 10 N. H. 385; Cronise v. Cronise, 54 Penn. St. 255; Carson v. Carson, 40 Miss. 349; Adams v. Palmer, 51 Me. 480.

³ Holmes v. Holmes, 4 Barb. 295.

or to impair the right, it necessarily bears on the obligation of the contract, in favor of one party, to the injury of the other; hence any law which, in its operations, amounts to a denial or obstruction of the rights accruing by a contract, though professing to act only on the remedy, is directly obnoxious to the prohibition of the Constitution.”¹ “It is the civil obligation of contracts which [the Constitution] is designed to reach; that is, the obligation which is recognized * by, and results from, the law of the [* 286] State in which it is made. If, therefore, a contract when made is by the law of the place declared to be illegal, or deemed to be a nullity, or a *nude pact*, it has no civil obligation; because the law, in such cases, forbids its having any binding efficacy or force. It confers no legal right on the one party, and no correspondent legal duty on the other. There is no means allowed

¹ *McCracken v. Hayward*, 2 How. 612. “The obligation of a contract . . . is the law which binds the parties to perform their agreement. The law, then, which has this binding obligation, must govern and control the contract, in every shape in which it is intended to bear upon it, whether it affects its validity, construction, or discharge. It is, then, the municipal law of the State, whether that be written or unwritten, which is emphatically the law of the contract made within the State, and must govern it throughout, whenever its performance is sought to be enforced.” *Washington, J.*, in *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 259. “As I understand it, the law of the contract forms its obligation.” *Thompson, J.*, *ibid.* 302. “The obligation of the contract consists in the power and efficacy of the law which applies to, and enforces performance of, the contract, or the payment of an equivalent for non-performance. The obligation does not inhere and subsist in the contract itself, *proprio vigore*, but in the law applicable to the contract. This is the sense, I think, in which the Constitution uses the term ‘obligation.’” *Trimble, J.*, *ibid.* 318. And see *Van Baumbach v. Bade*, 9 Wis. 577;

Johnson v. Higgins, 3 Met. (Ky). 566; *People v. Ingersoll*, 58 N. Y. 1. Requirement of a license tax for permission to do what a contract with the city gives authority to do, without “let, molestation, or hindrance,” is void. *Stein v. Mobile*, 49 Ala. 362; 20 Am. Rep. 283. But licenses in general are subject to the taxing power. *Home Ins. Co. v. Augusta*, 93 U. S. Rep. 116; *Read v. Beall*, 42 Miss. 472; *Cooley on Taxation*, 386, and cases cited. That a constitutional convention has no more power to violate the obligation of contracts than the legislature, see *Oliver v. Memphis, &c. R. R. Co.*, 30 Ark. 128; *ante*, p. *33, and cases cited. A law giving interest on debts, which bore none when contracted, was held void in *Goggans v. Turnispeed*, 1 S. C. n. s. 40; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 273. The legislature cannot authorize the compulsory extinction of ground rents, on payment of a sum in gross. *Palairet’s Appeal*, 67 Penn. St. 479; s. c. 5 Am. Rep. 450. A State law, discontinuing a public work, does not impair the obligation of contracts, the contractor having his just claim for damages. *Lord v. Thomas*, 64 N. Y. 107.

or recognized to enforce it; for the maxim is *ex nudo pacto non oritur actio*. But, when it does not fall within the predicament of being either illegal or void, its obligatory force is coextensive with its stipulations."¹

Such being the obligation of a contract, it is obvious that the rights of the parties in respect to it are liable to be affected in many ways by changes in the laws, which it could not have been the intention of the constitutional provision to preclude. "There are few laws which concern the general police of a State, or the government of its citizens, in their intercourse with each other or with strangers, which may not in some way or other affect the contracts which they have entered into or may thereafter form. For what are laws of evidence, or which concern remedies, frauds, and perjuries, laws of registration, and those which affect landlord and tenant, sales at auction, acts of limitation, and those which limit the fees of professional men, and the charges of tavern keepers, and a multitude of others which crowd the codes of every State, but laws which affect the validity, construction, or duration, or discharge of contracts?"² But the changes in these laws are not regarded as necessarily affecting the obligation of contracts. Whatever belongs merely to the remedy, may be altered according to the will of the State, provided the alteration does not impair the obligation of the contract;³ and it does not impair it, provided it leaves the parties a substantial remedy, according to the course of justice as it existed at the time the contract was made.⁴

¹ Story on Const. § 1380. Slave contracts, which were legal when made, are not rendered invalid by the abolition of slavery; nor can the States make them void by their constitutions, or deny remedies for their enforcement. *White v. Hart*, 13 Wall. 649; *Osborn v. Nicholson*, 13 Wall. 653; *Jacaway v. Denton*, 25 Ark. 641. An act of indemnity held not to relieve a sheriff from his obligation on his official bond to account for moneys which had been paid away under military compulsion. *State v. Gatzweiler*, 49 Mo. 17; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 119.

² *Washington, J.*, in *Ogden v.*

Saunders, 12 Wheat. 259. As to the indirect modification of contracts by the operation of police laws, see *post*, pp. *574-*584. The taxing power conferred upon a municipal corporation is not a contract between it and the State. *Richmond v. Richmond, &c. R. R. Co.*, 21 Grat. 611.

³ *Bronson v. Kinzie*, 1 How. 316, per *Taney*, Ch. J.

⁴ *Stocking v. Hunt*, 3 Denio, 274; *Van Baumbach v. Bade*, 9 Wis. 578; *Bronson v. Kinzie*, 1 How. 316; *McCracken v. Hayward*, 2 How. 608; *Butler v. Palmer*, 1 Hill, 324; *Van Renselaer v. Snyder*, 9 Barb. 302, and 13 N. Y. 299; *Conkey v. Hart*, 14

* *Changes in Remedies.* It has accordingly been held [* 287] that laws changing remedies for the enforcement of legal contracts will be valid, even though the new remedy be less convenient than the old, or less prompt and speedy.¹

“Without impairing the obligation of the contract, the remedy may certainly be modified as the wisdom of the nation shall direct.”² To take a strong instance; although the law at the time the contract is made permits the creditor to take the body of his debtor in execution, there can be no doubt of the right to abolish all laws for this purpose, leaving the creditor to his

N. Y. 22; *Guild v. Rogers*, 8 Barb. 502; *Story v. Furman*, 25 N. Y. 214; *Coriell v. Ham*, 4 Greene (Iowa), 455; *Heyward v. Judd*, 4 Minn. 483; *Swift v. Fletcher*, 6 Minn. 550; *Maynes v. Moor*, 16 Ind. 116; *Smith v. Packard*, 12 Wis. 371; *Grosvenor v. Chesley*, 48 Me. 369; *Van Renselaer v. Ball*, 19 N. Y. 100; *Van Renselaer v. Hays*, 19 N. Y. 68; *Litchfield v. McComber*, 42 Barb. 288; *Paschal v. Perez*, 7 Tex. 365; *Auld v. Butcher*, 2 Kan. 155; *Kenyon v. Stewart*, 44 Penn. St. 179; *Clark v. Martin*, 49 Penn. St. 299; *Rison v. Farr*, 24 Ark. 161; *Oliver v. McClure*, 28 Ark. 555; *Holland v. Dickerson*, 41 Iowa, 367; *Wales v. Wales*, 119 Mass. 89; *Sanders v. Hillsborough Insurance Co.*, 44 N. H. 238; *Huntzinger v. Brock*, 3 Grant's Cases, 243; *Mechanics', &c. Bank Appeal*, 31 Conn. 63; *Garland v. Brown's Adm'r*, 23 Grat. 173.

¹ *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 270; *Beers v. Haughton*, 9 Pet. 359; *Bumgardner v. Circuit Court*, 4 Mo. 50; *Trapley v. Hamer*, 17 Miss. 310; *Quackenbush v. Danks*, 1 Denio, 128, 3 Denio, 594, and 1 N. Y. 129; *Bronson v. Newberry*, 2 Doug. (Mich.) 38; *Rockwell v. Hubbell's Adm'rs*, 2 Doug. (Mich.) 197; *Evans v. Montgomery*, 4 W. & S. 218; *Holloway v. Sherman*, 12 Iowa, 282; *Sprecker v. Wakeley*, 11 Wis. 432; *Smith v. Packard*, 12 Wis. 371; *Porter v.*

Mariner, 50 Mo. 364; *Morse v. Goold*, 11 N. Y. 281; *Penrose v. Erie Canal Co.*, 56 Penn. St. 46; *Smith v. Van Gilder*, 26 Ark. 527; *Coosa River St. B. Co. v. Barclay*, 30 Ala. 120; *Baldwin v. Newark*, 38 N. J. 158; *Simpson v. Savings Bank*, 56 N. H. 466.

² *Sturges v. Crowninshield*, 4 Wheat. 122, per *Marshall*, Ch. J. A statute allowing the defence of want of consideration in a sealed instrument previously given does not violate the obligation of contracts. *Williams v. Haines*, 27 Iowa, 251. See further *Parsons v. Casey*, 28 Iowa, 436; *Curtis v. Whitney*, 13 Wall. 68; *Cook v. Gregg*, 46 N. Y. 439. A statutory judgment lien may be taken away. *Watson v. N. Y. Central R. R. Co.*, 47 N. Y. 157; *Woodbury v. Grimes*, 1 Col. 100. *Contra*, *Gunn v. Barry*, 15 Wall. 610. It may be extended before it has expired. *Ellis v. Jones*, 51 Mo. 180. The obligation of the contract is not impaired if a substantial remedy remains. *Richmond v. Richmond, &c. R. R. Co.*, 21 Grat. 611. Whether the legislature may take away retrospectively the liability of stockholders for corporate debts, see *Coffin v. Rich*, 45 Me. 507; *Sawyer v. Northfield*, 7 Cush. 490. See further *Baldwin v. Newark*, 38 N. J. 158; *Augusta Bank v. Augusta*, 49 Me. 507; *Thistle v. Frostbury Coal Co.*, 10 Md. 129.

remedy against property alone. "Confinement of the debtor may be a punishment for not performing his contract, or may be allowed as a means of inducing him to perform it. But the State may refuse to inflict this punishment, or may withhold this means, and leave the contract in full force. Imprisonment is no part of the contract, and simply to release the prisoner does not impair the obligation."¹ So the exemption laws of a State may be modified from time to time, and the modifications made applicable to existing contracts, provided the exemptions are not so increased as to impair and lessen the value of the contract itself. The State "may, if it thinks proper, direct that the necessary implements of agriculture, or the tools of the mechanic, or articles of necessity in household furniture, shall, like wearing apparel, not be liable to execution on judgments. Regulations of this description have always been considered, in every civilized community, as properly belonging to the remedy, to be exercised or not, by every sovereignty, according to [* 288] its own views of policy and humanity. It * must reside in every State to enable it to secure its citizens from unjust and harassing litigation, and to protect them in those pursuits which are necessary to the existence and well-being of every community."²

¹ *Sturges v. Crowninshield*, 4 Wheat. 122, per *Marshall*, Ch. J.; *Mason v. Haile*, 12 Wheat. 370; *Bronson v. Newberry*, 2 Doug. (Mich.) 38; *Maxey v. Loyal*, 38 Geo. 531. A special act admitting a party imprisoned on a judgment for tort to take the poor debtors' oath was sustained in *Matter of Nichols*, 8 R. I. 50.

² *Bronson v. Kinzie*, 1 How. 311, per *Taney*, Ch. J.; *Rockwell v. Hubbell's Adm'rs*, 2 Doug. (Mich.) 197; *Quackenbush v. Danks*, 1 Denio, 128, 3 Denio, 594, and 1 N. Y. 129; *Morse v. Goold*, 11 N. Y. 281; *Sprecker v. Wakeley*, 11 Wis. 432; *Cusic v. Douglas*, 3 Kan. 123; *Maxey v. Loyal*, 38 Geo. 531; *Hardeman v. Downer*, 39 Geo. 425; *Hill v. Kessler*, 63 N. C. 437; *Farley v. Dowe*, 45 Ala. 324; *Sneider v. Heidelberger*, 45 Ala. 126; *In re Kennedy*, 2 S. C. n. s. 216;

Gunn v. Barry, 44 Geo. 351. It has been decided that a homestead exemption may be made applicable to previously existing contracts. *Hardeman v. Downer*, 39 Geo. 425; *Ladd v. Adams*, 66 N. C. 164. *Contra*, *Homestead Cases*, 22 Grat. 266; *Edwards v. Kearsey*, 96 U. S. Rep. 595, which must be regarded as settling the question. And see *Gunn v. Barry*, 15 Wall. 622; *Kibbey v. Jones*, 7 Bush. 243; *Kennedy v. Stacey*, 57 Tenn. 220; *Lessley v. Phipps*, 49 Miss. 790. "Statutes pertaining to the remedy are merely such as relate to the course and form of proceedings, but do not affect the substance of a judgment when pronounced." Per *Merrick*, Ch. J., in *Mortun v. Valentine*, 15 La. Ann. 150. See *Watson v. N. Y. Central R. R. Co.*, 47 N. Y. 157.

And laws which change the rules of evidence relate to the remedy only; and while, as we have elsewhere shown, such laws may, on general principles, be applied to existing causes of action, so, too, it is plain that they are not precluded from such application by the constitutional clause we are considering.¹ And it has been held that the legislature may even take away a common-law remedy altogether, without substituting any in its place, if another and efficient remedy remains. Thus, a law abolishing distress for rent has been sustained as applicable to leases in force at its passage;² and it was also held that an express stipulation in the lease, that the lessor should have this remedy, would not prevent the legislature from abolishing it, because this was a subject concerning which it was not competent for the parties to contract in such manner as to bind the hands of the State. In the language of the court: "If this is a subject on which parties can contract, and if their contracts when made become by virtue of the Constitution of the United States superior to the power of the legislature, then it follows that whatever at any time exists as part of the machinery for the administration of justice may be perpetuated, if parties choose so to agree. That this can scarcely have been within the contemplation of the makers of the Constitution, and that if it prevail as law it will give rise to grave inconveniences, is quite obvious. Every such stipulation is in its own nature conditional upon the lawful continuance of the process. The State is no party to * their contract. [* 289] It is bound to afford adequate process for the enforcement of rights; but it has not tied its own hands as to the modes by which it will administer justice. Those from necessity belong to the supreme power to prescribe; and their continuance is not the subject of contract between private parties. In truth, it is not at all probable that the parties made their agreement with reference to the possible abolition of distress for rent. The first clause of this special provision is, that the lessor may distrain, sue, re-enter, or resort to any other legal remedy, and the second

¹ *Neass v. Mercer*, 15 Barb. 318; *Bronson v. Kinzie*, 1 How. 311; *McRich v. Flanders*, 39 N. H. 304; *Howard v. Moot*, 64 N. Y. 262; *post*, pp. *367-*369. On this subject see the discussions in the federal courts, *Sturges v. Crowninshield*, 4 Wheat. 122; *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 213; *Bronson v. Kinzie*, 1 How. 311; *Cracken v. Hayward*, 2 How. 608; *Curtis v. Whitney*, 13 Wall. 68.

² *Van Rensselaer v. Synder*, 9 Barb. 302, and 13 N. Y. 299; *Guild v. Rogers*, 8 Barb. 502; *Conkey v. Hart*, 14 N. Y. 22.

is, that in cases of distress the lessee waives the exemption of certain property from the process, which by law was exempted. This waiver of exemption was undoubtedly the substantial thing which the parties had in view; but yet perhaps their language cannot be confined to this object, and it may therefore be proper to consider the contract as if it had been their clear purpose to preserve their legal remedy, even if the legislature should think fit to abolish it. In that aspect of it the contract was a subject over which they had no control.”¹

But a law which deprives a party of all legal remedy must necessarily be void. “If the legislature of the State were to undertake to make a law preventing the legal remedy upon a contract lawfully made, and binding on the party to it, there is no question that such legislature would, by such act, exceed its legitimate powers. Such an act must necessarily impair the obligation of the contract within the meaning of the Constitution.”² This has been held in regard to those cases in which it was sought to deprive certain classes of persons of the right to maintain suits, because of their having participated in rebellion against the government.³ And where a statute does not leave a party

¹ *Conkey v. Hart*, 14 N. Y. 30; citing *Handy v. Chatfield*, 23 Wend. 85; *Mason v. Haile*, 12 Wheat. 870; *Stocking v. Hunt*, 8 Denio, 274; and *Van Rensselaer v. Snyder*, 13 N. Y. 299. See *Briscoe v. Anketell*, 28 Miss. 361.

² *Call v. Hagger*, 8 Mass. 430. See *Osborne v. Nicholson*, 13 Wall. 662; *U. S. v. Conway*, Hempst. 313; *Johnson v. Bond*, Hempst. 533; *West v. Sansom*, 44 Geo. 295. See *Griffin v. Wilcox*, 21 Ind. 370; *Penrose v. Erie Canal Co.*, 56 Penn. St. 46; *Thompson v. Commonwealth*, 81 Penn. St. 314; *post*, p. *361. An act withdrawing all the property of a debtor from the operation of legal process, leaving only a barren right to sue, is void. *State v. Bank of South Carolina*, 1 S. C. N. s. 63.

³ *Rison v. Farr*, 24 Ark. 161; *McFarland v. Butler*, 8 Minn. 116; *Jackson v. Same*, 8 Minn. 117. But there is nothing to preclude the people

of a State, in an amendment to their constitution, taking away rights of action, or other rights, so long as they abstain from impairing the obligation of contracts, and from imposing punishments. The power to do so has been exercised with a view to the quieting of controversies and the restoration of domestic peace after the late civil war. Thus, in Missouri and some other States, all rights of action for any thing done by the State or federal military authorities, during the war, were taken away by constitutional provision; and the authority to do this was fully supported. *Drehman v. Stifel*, 41 Mo. 184; *s. o. in error*, 8 Wall. 595. And see *Hess v. Johnson*, 3 W. Va. 645. A remedy may also be denied to a party until he has performed his duty to the State in respect to the demand in suit: *e. g.* paid the tax upon the debt sued for. *Walker v. Whitehead*, 43 Geo. 538; *Garrett v. Cordell*, 43 Geo. 366;

a substantial remedy according to the course of justice as it existed at the time the contract was made, but shows upon its face an intention to clog, hamper, or embarrass the proceedings to enforce the remedy, so as to destroy it entirely, and thus impair the contract so far as it is in the * power of [* 290] the legislature to do it, such statute cannot be regarded as a mere regulation of the remedy, but is void, because a substantial denial of right.¹

It has also been held where a statute dividing a town and incorporating a new one enacted that the new town should pay its proportion towards the support of paupers then constituting a charge against the old town, that a subsequent statute exonerating the new town from this liability was void as impairing the contract created by the first-mentioned statute;² but there are cases which have reached a different conclusion, reasoning from the general and almost unlimited control which the State retains over its municipalities.³ In any case the lawful repeal of a statute cannot constitutionally be made to destroy contracts which have been entered into under it; these being legal when made, they remain valid notwithstanding the repeal.⁴

So where, by its terms, a contract provides for the payment of money by one party to another, and, by the law then in force, property would be liable to be seized, and sold on execution to the highest bidder, to satisfy any judgment recovered on such contract, a subsequent law, forbidding property from being sold on execution for less than two-thirds the valuation made by appraisers, pursuant to the directions contained in the law, though professing to act only on the remedy, amounts to a denial or obstruction of the rights accruing by the contract, and is directly obnoxious to the prohibition of the Constitution.⁵ So a law which

Welborn v. Akin, 44 Geo. 420. But this is denied as regards contracts entered into before the passage of the law. *Walker v. Whitehead*, 16 Wall. 314.

¹ *Oatman v. Bond*, 15 Wis. 28. As to control of remedies, see *post*, p. *361.

² *Bowdoinham v. Richmond*, 6 Me. 112.

³ See *ante*, p. *193, and cases cited in note.

⁴ *Tuolumne Redemption Co. v.*

Sedgwick, 15 Cal. 515; *McCauley v. Brooks*, 16 Cal. 11; *Commonwealth v. New Bedford Bridge*, 2 Gray, 339; *State v. Phalen*, 3 Harr. 441; *State v. Hawthorn*, 9 Mo. 389.

⁵ *McCracken v. Hayward*, 2 How. 608; *Willard v. Longstreet*, 2 Doug. (Mich.) 172; *Rawley v. Hooker*, 21 Ind. 144. So a law which, as to existing mortgages foreclosable by sale, prohibits the sale for less than half the appraised value of the land, is

takes away from mortgagees the right to possession under their mortgages until after foreclosure is void, because depriving them of the right to the rents and profits, which was a valuable portion of the right secured by the contract. "By this act the mortgagee is required to incur the additional expense of foreclosure, before obtaining possession, and is deprived of the right to add to his security, by the perception of the rents and profits of the premises, during the time required to accomplish this and the time of redemption, and during that time the rents and profits are given to another, who may or may not appropriate them to the payment of the debt, as he chooses, and the mortgagee in the [* 291] * mean time is subjected to the risk, often considerable, of the depreciation in the value of the security."¹ So a law is void which extends the time for the redemption of lands sold on execution, or for delinquent taxes, after the sales have been made; for in such a case the contract with the purchaser, and for which he has paid his money, is, that he shall have title at the time then provided by the law; and to extend the time for redemption is to alter the substance of the contract, as much as would be the extension of the time for payment of a promis-

void for the same reason. *Gantley's Lessee v. Ewing*, 3 How. 707; *Bronson v. Kinzie*, 1 How. 311. And a law authorizing property to be turned out in satisfaction of a contract is void. *Abercrombie v. Baxter*, 44 Geo. 36. The "scaling laws," so called, under which contracts made while Confederate notes were the only currency, are allowed to be satisfied on payment of a sum equal to what the sum called for by them in Confederate notes was worth when they were made, have been sustained, but this is on the assumption that the contracts are enforced as near as possible according to the actual intent. *Harmon v. Wallace*, 2 S. C. n. s. 208; *Robeson v. Brown*, 63 N. C. 554; *Hillard v. Moore*, 65 N. C. 540; *Pharis v. Dice*, 21 Grat. 303; *Thornington v. Smith*, 8 Wall. 1.

¹ *Mundy v. Monroe*, 1 Mich. 76; *Blackwood v. Vanvleet*, 11 Mich. 252. Compare *Dikeman v. Dikeman*, 11

Paige, 484; *James v. Stull*, 9 Barb. 482; *Cook v. Gray*, 2 Houston, 455. In the last case it was held that a statute shortening the notice to be given on foreclosure of a mortgage under the power of sale, from twenty-four to twelve weeks, was valid as affecting the remedy only; and that a stipulation in a mortgage that on default being made in payment the mortgagee might sell "according to law," meant according to the law as it should be when sale was made. But see *Ashuelot R. R. Co. v. Eliot*, 52 N. H. 387, and what is said on the general subject in *Cochran v. Darcy*, 5 Rich. 125. In *Bathold v. Fox*, 13 Minn. 501, it was decided that in the case of a mortgage given while the law allowed the mortgagee possession during the period allowed for redemption after foreclosure, such law might be so changed as to take away this right. But *quere*.

sory note.¹ So a law which shortens the time for redemption from a mortgage, after a foreclosure sale has taken place, is void; the rights of the party being fixed by the foreclosure and the law then in force, and the mortgagor being entitled, under the law, to possession of the land until the time of redemption expires.² And where by statute a purchaser of lands from the State had the right, upon the forfeiture of his contract of purchase for the non-payment of the sum due upon it, to revive it at any time before a public sale of the lands, by the payment of all sums due upon the contract, with a penalty of five per cent, it was held that this right could not be taken away by a subsequent change in the law which subjected the forfeited lands to private entry and sale.³ And a statute which * authorizes stay of exe- [* 292] cution, for an unreasonable or indefinite period, on judgments rendered on pre-existing contracts, is void, as postponing payment, and taking away all remedy during the continuance of the stay.⁴ And a law is void on this ground which declares a for-

¹ *Robinson v. Howe*, 13 Wis. 341; *Dikeman v. Dikeman*, 11 Paige, 484; *Goenen v. Schroeder*, 8 Minn. 387. But see *Stone v. Basset*, 4 Minn. 298; *Heyward v. Judd*, 4 Minn. 483; *Freeborn v. Pettibone*, 5 Minn. 277.

² *Cargill v. Power*, 1 Mich. 369. The contrary ruling was made in *Butler v. Palmer*, 1 Hill, 324, by analogy to the Statute of Limitations. The statute, it was said, was no more in effect than saying: "Unless you redeem within the shorter time prescribed, you shall have no action for a recovery of the land, nor shall your defence against an action be allowed, provided you get possession." And in *Robinson v. Howe*, 13 Wis. 346, the court, speaking of a similar right in a party, say: "So far as his right of redemption was concerned, it was not derived from any contract, but was given by the law only; and the time within which he might exercise it might be shortened by the legislature, provided a reasonable time was left in which to exercise it, without impairing the obligation of any con-

tract." And see *Smith v. Packard*, 12 Wis. 371, to the same effect.

³ *State v. Commissioners of School and University lands*, 4 Wis. 414.

⁴ *Chadwick v. Moore*, 8 W. & S. 49; *Bunn v. Gorgas*, 41 Penn. St. 441; *Stevens v. Andrews*, 31 Mo. 205; *Hasbrouck v. Shipman*, 16 Wis. 296. In *Breitenbach v. Bush*, 44 Penn. St. 313, and *Coxe v. Martin*, 44 Penn. St. 322, it was held that an act staying all civil process against volunteers who had enlisted in the national service for three years or during the war was valid, — "during the war" being construed to mean unless the war should sooner terminate. See also *State v. Carew*, 13 Rich. 498. A general law that all suits pending should be continued until peace between the Confederate States and the United States, was held void in *Burt v. Williams*, 24 Ark. 94. See also *Taylor v. Stearns*, 18 Grat. 244; *Hudspeth v. Davis*, 41 Ala. 389; *Aycock v. Martin*, 37 Geo. 124; *Coffman v. Bank of Kentucky*, 40 Miss. 29; *Jacobs v. Smallwood*,

feiture of the charter of a corporation for acts or omissions which constituted no cause of forfeiture at the time they occurred.¹ And it has been held that where a statute authorized a municipal corporation to issue bonds, and to exercise the power of local taxation in order to pay them, and persons bought and paid value for bonds issued accordingly, this power of taxation is part of the contract, and cannot be withdrawn until the bonds are satisfied; that an attempt to repeal or restrict it by statute is void; and that unless the corporation imposes and collects the tax in all respects as if the subsequent statute had not been passed, it will be compelled to do so by *mandamus*.² And it has also been held that a statute repealing a former statute, which made the stock of stockholders in a corporation liable for its debts, was, in respect to creditors existing at the time of the repeal, a law impairing the obligation of contracts.³ In each of these cases it is evident [* 293] that substantial rights * were affected; and so far as the laws which were held void operated upon the remedy, they either had an effect equivalent to importing some new stipulation into the contract, or they failed to leave the party a substantial remedy such as was assured to him by the law in force

63 N. C. 112; *Cutts v. Hardee*, 38 Geo. 350; *Sequestration Cases*, 30 Tex. 688. A law permitting a year's stay upon judgments where security is given was held valid in *Farnsworth v. Vance*, 2 Cold. 108; but this decision was overruled in *Webster v. Rose*, 6 Heisk. 93; s. c. 19 Am. Rep. 583. A statute was held void which stayed all proceedings against volunteers who had enlisted "during the war," this period being indefinite. *Clark v. Martin*, 3 Grant's Cas. 393. In *Johnson v. Higgins*, 3 Met. (Ky.) 566, it was held that the act of the Kentucky legislature of May 24, 1861, which forbade the rendition in all the courts of the State, of any judgment from date till January 1st, 1862, was valid. It related, it was said, not to the remedy for enforcing a contract, but to the courts which administer the remedy; and those courts, in a legal sense, constitute no part of the remedy. A law ex-

empting soldiers from civil process until thirty days after their discharge from military service was held valid as to all contracts subsequently entered into, in *Bruns v. Crawford*, 34 Mo. 330. And see *McCormick v. Rusch*, 15 Iowa, 127. A statute suspending limitation laws during the existence of civil war, and until the State was restored to her proper relations to the Union, was sustained in *Bender v. Crawford*, 33 Tex. 745. Compare *Bradford v. Shine*, 13 Fla. 393.

¹ *People v. Jackson and Michigan Plank Road Co.*, 9 Mich. 285, per *Christianity, J.*; *State v. Tombeckbee Bank*, 2 Stew. 30. See *Ireland v. Turnpike Co.*, 19 Ohio, n. s. 373.

² *Van Hoffman v. Quincy*, 4 Wall. 535. See also *Soutter v. Madison*, 15 Wis. 30; *Smith v. Appleton*, 19 Wis. 468.

³ *Hawthorne v. Calef*, 2 Wall. 10.

when the contract was made. In Pennsylvania it has been held that a statute authorizing a stay of execution on contracts in which the debtor had waived the right was unconstitutional;¹ but it seems to us that an agreement to waive a legal privilege which the law gives as a matter of State policy cannot be binding upon a party, unless the law itself provides for the waiver.²

Where, however, by the operation of existing laws, a contract cannot be enforced without some new action of a party to fix his liability, it is as competent to prescribe by statute the requisites to the legal validity of such act as it would be in any case to prescribe the legal requisites of a contract to be thereafter made. Thus, though a verbal promise is sufficient to revive a debt barred by the Statute of Limitations or by bankruptcy, yet this rule may be changed by a statute making all such future promises void unless in writing.³ It is also equally true that where a legal impediment exists to the enforcement of a contract which parties have entered into, the constitutional provision in question will not preclude the legislature from removing such impediment and validating the contract. A statute of that description would not impair the obligation of contracts, but would perfect and enforce it.⁴ And for similar reasons the obligation of contracts is not impaired by continuing the charter of a corporation for a certain period, in order to the proper closing its business.⁵

State Insolvent Laws. In this connection some notice may seem requisite of the power of the States to pass insolvent laws, and the classes of contracts to which they may be made to apply. As this whole subject has been gone over very often and very fully by the Supreme Court of the United States, and the important questions seem at last to be finally set at rest, and moreover as it is comparatively unimportant while a federal bankrupt law exists, we shall * content ourselves with giving [* 294] what we understand to be the conclusions of the court.

¹ *Billmeyer v. Evans*, 40 Penn. St. 324; *Lewis v. Lewis*, 44 Penn. St. 127. See *Laucks' Appeal*, 24 Penn. 426; *Case v. Dunmore*, 23 Penn. 93; *Bowman v. Smiley*, 31 Penn. 225.

² See *Conkey v. Hart*, 14 N. Y. 30; *Handy v. Chatfield*, 23 Wend. 35.

³ *Joy v. Thompson*, 1 Doug. (Mich.) 373; *Kingsley v. Cousins*, 47 Me. 91.

⁴ As where the defence of usury to a contract is taken away by statute. *Welsh v. Wadsworth*, 30 Conn. 149; *Curtis v. Leavitt*, 15 N. Y. 9. And see *Wood v. Kennedy*, 19 Ind. 68, and the cases cited, *post*, pp. *375, *376.

⁵ *Foster v. Essex Bank*, 16 Mass. 245.

1. The several States have power to legislate on the subject of bankrupt and insolvent laws, subject, however, to the authority conferred upon Congress by the Constitution to adopt a uniform system of bankruptcy, which authority, when exercised, is paramount, and State enactments in conflict with those in Congress upon the subject must give way.¹

2. Such State laws, however, discharging the person or the property of the debtor, and thereby terminating the legal obligation of the debts, cannot constitutionally be made to apply to contracts entered into before they were passed, but they may be made applicable to such future contracts as can be considered as having been made in reference to them.²

3. Contracts made within a State where an insolvent law exists, between citizens of that State, are to be considered as made in reference to the law, and are subject to its provisions. But the law cannot apply to a contract made in one State between a citizen thereof and a citizen of another State,³ nor to contracts not made within the State, even though made between citizens of the same State,⁴ except, perhaps, where they are citizens of the State passing the law.⁵ And where the contract is made between a citizen of one State and a citizen of another, the circumstance that the contract is made payable in the State where the insolvent law exists will not render such contract subject to be discharged under the law.⁶ If, however, the creditor in any of these cases makes himself a party to proceedings under the insolvent law, he will be bound thereby like any other party to judicial proceedings, and is not to be heard afterwards to object that his debt was excluded by the Constitution from being affected by the law.⁷

New provisions for personal liberty, and for the protection of

¹ *Sturges v. Crowninshield*, 4 Wheat. 122; *Farmers' and Mechanics' Bank v. Smith*, 6 Wheat. 131; *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 213; *Baldwin v. Hale*, 1 Wall. 229.

² *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 213.

³ *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 213; *Springer v. Foster*, 2 Story, 387; *Boyle v. Zacharie*, 6 Pet. 348; *Woodhull v. Wagner*, Baldw. 300; *Suydam v. Broadnax*, 14 Pet. 75; *Cook*

v. Moffat, 5 How. 310; *Baldwin v. Hale*, 1 Wall. 231.

⁴ *McMillan v. McNeill*, 4 Wheat. 209.

⁵ *Marsh v. Putnam*, 3 Gray, 551.

⁶ *Baldwin v. Hale*, 1 Wall. 223; *Baldwin v. Bank of Newberry*, 1 Wall. 234; *Gilman v. Lockwood*, 4 Wall. 409.

⁷ *Clay v. Smith*, 3 Pet. 411; *Baldwin v. Hale*, 1 Wall. 223; *Gilman v. Lockwood*, 4 Wall. 409.

the right to life, liberty, and property, are made by the thirteenth and fourteenth amendments to the Constitution of the United States; and these will be referred to in the two succeeding chapters.¹ The most important clause in the fourteenth amendment is that part of section 1 which declares that all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.² This provision very properly puts an end to any question of the title of the freedmen and others of their race to the rights of citizenship; but it may be doubtful whether the further provisions of the same section surround the citizen with any protections additional to those before possessed under the State constitutions; though, as a principle of State constitutional law has now been made a part of the Constitution of the United States, the effect will be to make the Supreme Court of the United States the final arbiter of cases in which a violation of this principle by State laws is complained of, inasmuch as the decisions of the State courts upon laws which are supposed to violate it will be subject to review in that court on appeal.³

¹ See *ante*, p. *11; *post*, pp. *299, *397.

² The complete text of this section is as follows: "Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States, and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

³ See *ante*, pp. *12-*14. Notwithstanding this section, the protection of all citizens in their privileges and immunities, and in their right to an impartial administration of the laws, is just as much the business of the individual States as it was before.

This amendment of the Constitution does not concentrate power in the general government for any purpose of police government within the States; its object is to preclude legislation by any State which shall "abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States," or "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law," or "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws;" and Congress is empowered to pass all laws necessary to render such unconstitutional State legislation ineffectual. This amendment has received a very full examination at the hands of the Supreme Court of the United States in the *Slaughter-House Case*, 16 Wall. 36, and in *United States v. Cruikshanks*, 92 U. S. Rep. 542, with the conclusion above stated. See Story on Const. (4th ed.) App. to Vol. II.

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* CHAPTER X.

OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS TO PERSONAL LIBERTY.

ALTHOUGH the people from whom we derive our laws now possess a larger share of civil and political liberty than any other in Europe, there was a period in their history when a considerable proportion were in a condition of servitude. Of the servile classes one portion were *villeins regardant*, or serfs attached to the soil, and transferable with it, but not otherwise,¹ while the other portion were *villeins in gross*, whose condition resembled that of the slaves known to modern law in America.² How these people became reduced to this unhappy condition, it may not be possible to determine at this distance of time with entire accuracy; but in regard to the first class, we may suppose that when a conqueror seized the territory upon which he found them living, he seized also the people as a part of the lawful prize of war, granting them life on condition of their cultivating the soil for his use; and that the second were often persons whose lives had been spared on the field of battle, and whose ownership, in accordance with the custom of barbarous times, would pertain to the persons of their captors. Many other causes also contributed to reduce persons to this condition.³ At the beginning of the reign of John

¹ Litt. § 181; 2 Bl. Com. 92. "They originally held lands of their lords on condition of agricultural service, which in a certain sense was servile, but in reality was not so, as the actual work was done by the theows, or slaves. . . . They did not pay rent, and were not removable at pleasure; they went with the land and rendered services, uncertain in their nature, and therefore opposed to rent. They were the originals of copyholders." Note to Reeves, History of English Law, Pt. I. c. 1.

² Litt. § 181; 2 Bl. Com. 92. "These are the persons who are described by Sir William Temple as

'a sort of people who were in a condition of downright servitude, used and employed in the most servile works; and belonging, they and their children and effects, to the lord of the soil, like the rest of the stock or cattle upon it.'" Reeves, History of English Law, Pt. I. c. 1.

³ For a view of the condition of the servile classes, see Wright, Domestic Manners and Sentiments, 101, 102; Crabbe, History of English Law (ed. of 1829), pp. 8, 78, 365; Hallam, Middle Ages, Pt. II. c. 2; Vaughan, Revolutions in English History, Book 2, c. 8; Broom, Const. Law, 74 *et seq.*

it has been estimated that one-half of the Anglo-Saxons were in a condition of servitude, and if we go back to the time of the Conquest, we find a still larger proportion of the people held as the property of their lords, and incapable of acquiring and holding any property as their own.¹ Their treatment was such as might have been expected from masters trained to war and violence, accustomed to think lightly of human life and human suffering, and who knew little of and cared less for any doctrine of human rights which embraced within its scope others besides the governing classes.

It would be idle to attempt to follow the imperceptible steps by * which involuntary servitude at length came to [* 296] an end in England. It was never abolished by statute,² and the time when slavery ceased altogether cannot be accurately determined.³ The causes were at work silently for centuries; the historian did not at the time note them; the statesman did not observe them; they were not the subject of agitation or controversy; but the time arrived when the philanthropist could examine the laws and institutions of his country, and declare that slavery had ceased to be recognized, though at what precise point in legal history the condition became unlawful he might

¹ Hume, History of England, Vol. I. App. 1.

² Barrington on the Statutes (3d ed.) 272.

³ Mr. Hargrave says, at the commencement of the seventeenth century. 20 State Trials, 40; May, Const. Hist. c. 11. And Mr. Barrington (On Stat. 3d ed. p. 278) cites from Rymer a commission from Queen Elizabeth in the year 1574, directed to Lord Burghley and Sir Walter Mildmay, for inquiring into the lands, tenements, and other goods of all her bondmen and bondwomen in the counties of Cornwall, Devonshire, Somerset, and Gloucester, such as were by blood in a slavish condition, by being born in any of her manors, and to compound with any or all of such bondmen or bondwomen for their manumission and freedom. And this commission, he says, in connection with other circumstances, explains why we hear no

more of this kind of servitude. And see Crabbe, History of English Law (ed. of 1829), 574. This author says that villeinage had disappeared by the time of Charles II. Hurd says in 1661. Law of Freedom and Bondage, Vol. I. p. 136. And see 2 Bl. Com. 96. Lord Campbell's Lives of the Chief Justices, c. 5. Macaulay says there were traces of slavery under the Stuarts. History of England, c. 1. Hume (History of England, c. 23) thinks there was no law recognizing it after the time of Henry VII., and that it had ceased before the death of Elizabeth. Froude (History of England, c. 1) says in the reign of Henry VIII. it had practically ceased. Mr. Christian says the last claim of villeinage which we find recorded in our courts was in 15th James I. Noy, 27; 11 State Trials, 342. Note to Blackstone, Book 2, p. 96.

not be able to determine. Among the causes of its abrogation he might be able to enumerate: 1. That the slaves were of the same race with their masters. There was therefore not only an absence of that antipathy which is often found existing when the ruling and the ruled are of different races, and especially of different color, but instead thereof an active sympathy might often be supposed to exist, which would lead to frequent emancipations. 2. The common law presumed every man to be free until proved to be otherwise; and this presumption, when the slave was of the same race as his master, and had no natural badge of servitude, must often have rendered it extremely difficult to recover the fugitive who denied his thralldom. 3. A residence for a year and

a day in a corporate town rendered the villein legally free;¹ [* 297] so that to him the towns constituted cities of * refuge.

4. The lord treating him as a freeman, — as by receiving homage from him as tenant, or entering into a contract with him under seal, — thereby emancipated him, by recognizing in him a capacity to perform those acts which only a freeman could perform. 5. Even the lax morals of the times were favorable to liberty, since the condition of the child followed that of the father;² and in law the illegitimate child was *nullius filius*, — had no father. And, 6. The influence of the priesthood was generally against slavery, and must often have shielded the fugitive and influenced emancipations by appeals to the conscience, especially when the master was near the close of life, and the conscience naturally most sensitive.³ And with all these influ-

¹ Crabbe, History of English Law (ed. of 1829), p. 79. But this was only as to third persons. The claim of the lord might be made within three years. Ibid. And see Mackintosh, History of England, c. 4.

² Barrington on Statutes (3d ed.), 276, note; 2 Bl. Com. 93. But in the very quaint account of "Villeinage and Niefy," in Mirror of Justice, § 28, it is said, among other things, that "those are villeins who are begotten of a freeman and a nief, and born out of matrimony." The ancient rule appears to have been that the condition of the child followed that of the mother; but this was changed in the time of Henry I.

Crabbe, History of English Law (ed. of 1829), p. 78; Hallam, Middle Ages, Pt. II. c. 2.

³ In 1514, Henry VIII. manumitted two of his villeins in the following words: "Whereas God created all men free, but afterwards the laws and customs of nations subjected some under the yoke of servitude, we think it *pious and meritorious with God* to manumit Henry Knight, a tailor, and John Herle, a husbandman, our natives, as being born within the manor of Stoke Clynercysland, in our county of Cornwall, together with all their issue born or to be born, and all their goods, lands, and chattels acquired, so as the said persons and their issue

ences there should be noted the further circumstance, that a class of freemen was always near to the slaves in condition and suffering, with whom they were in association, and between whom and themselves there were frequent intermarriages,¹ and that from these to the highest order in the State there were successive grades; the children of the highest gradually finding their way into those below them, and ways being open by which the children of the lowest might advance themselves, by intelligence, energy, or thrift, through the successive grades above them, until the descendants of dukes and earls were found cultivating the soil, and the man of obscure descent winning a place among the aristocracy of the realm, through his successful exertions at the bar, or his services to the State. Inevitably these influences must at length overthrow the *slavery [* 298] of white men which existed in England,² and no other ever became established within the realm. Slavery was permitted, and indeed fostered, in the colonies; in part because a profit was made of the trade, and in part also because it was supposed that the peculiar products of some of them could not be profitably cultivated with free labor;³ and at times masters brought their slaves with them to England and removed them again without question, until in *Sommersett's Case*, in 1771, it was ruled by Lord *Mansfield* that slavery was repugnant to the common law, and to bring a slave into England was to emancipate him.⁴

shall from henceforth by us be free and of free condition." Barrington on Statutes (3d ed.), 275. See Mackintosh, *History of England*, c. 4. Compare this with a deed of manumission in Massachusetts, to be found in Sumner's *Speeches*, II. 289; *Memoir of Chief Justice Parsons*, by his son, 176, note.

¹ Wright, *Domestic Manners and Sentiments*, p. 112.

² Macaulay (*History of England*, c. 1) says the chief instrument of emancipation was the Christian religion. Mackintosh (*History of England*, c. 4) also attributes to the priesthood great influence in this reform, not only by their direct appeals to the conscience, but by the judges, who were

ecclesiastics, multiplying presumptions and rules of evidence consonant to the equal and humane spirit which breathes throughout the morality of the Gospel. Hume (*History of England*, c. 23) seems to think emancipation was brought about by selfish considerations on the part of the barons, and from a conviction that the returns from their lands would be increased by changing villeinage into socage tenures.

³ Robertson, *America*, Book 9; Bancroft, *United States*, Vol. I. c. 5.

⁴ Lofft, 18; 20 Howell *State Trials*, 1; *Life of Granville Sharp*, by Hoare, c. 4; Hurd, *Law of Freedom and Bondage*, Vol. I. p. 189. The judgment of Lord Mansfield is said to

The same opinion had been previously expressed by Lord *Holt*, but without authoritative decision.¹

In Scotland a condition of servitude continued to a later period. The holding of negroes in slavery was indeed [* 299] held to be illegal * soon after the *Sommersett Case*; but the salters and colliers did not acquire their freedom until 1799, nor without an act of Parliament.² A previous statute for their enfranchisement through judicial proceedings had proved ineffectual.³

The history of slavery in this country pertains rather to general history than to a work upon State constitutional law. Throughout the land involuntary servitude is abolished by constitutional amendment, except as it may be imposed in the punishment of crime.⁴ Nor do we suppose the exception will permit the convict to be subjected to other servitude than such as is under the control and direction of the public authorities, in the

have been delivered with evident reluctance. 20 State Trials, 79; per Lord *Stowell*, 2 Hagg. Adm. 105, 110; Broom, Const. Law, 105. Of the practice prior to the decision Lord *Stowell* said: "The personal traffic in slaves resident in England had been as public and as authorized in London as in any of our West India Islands. They were sold on the Exchange, and other places of public resort, by parties themselves resident in London, and with as little reserve as they would have been in any of our West India possessions. Such a state of things continued without impeachment from a very early period up to nearly the end of the last century." The *Slave Grace*, 2 Hagg. Adm. 105. In this case it was decided that if a slave, carried by his master into a free country, voluntarily returned with him to a country where slavery was allowed by the local law, the *status* of slave would still attach to him, and the master's right to his service be resumed. Mr. Broom collects the authorities on this subject in general, in the notes to *Sommersett's Case*, Const. Law, 105.

¹ "As soon as a slave comes into England, he becomes free; one may be a villein in England, but not a slave." *Holt*, Ch. J., in *Smith v. Brown*, 2 Salk. 666. See also *Smith v. Gould*, *Ld. Raym.* 1274; s. c. Salk. 666. There is a learned note in *Quincy's Rep.* p. 94, collecting the English authorities on the subject of slavery.

² 39 Geo. III. c. 56.

³ May's Const. Hist. c. 11.

⁴ Amendments to Const. of U. S. art. 13. See *Story on the Constitution* (4th ed.), c. 46, for the history of this article, and the decisions bearing upon it. The Maryland act for the apprenticing of colored children, which made important and invidious distinctions between them and white children, and gave the master property rights in their services not given in other cases, was held void under this article. *Matter of Turner*, 1 Abb. U. S. 84. This thirteenth amendment conferred no political rights, and left the negro under all his political disabilities. *Marshall v. Donovan*, 10 Bush, 681. See also *United States v. Cruikshanks*, 94 U. S. Rep. 542.

manner heretofore customary. The laws of the several States allow the letting of the services of the convicts, either singly or in numbers, to contractors who are to employ them in mechanical trades in or near the prison, and under the surveillance of its officers; but it might well be doubted if a regulation which should suffer the convict to be placed upon the auction block and sold to the highest bidder, either for life or for a term of years, would be in harmony with the constitutional prohibition. It is certain that it would be open to very grave abuses, and it is so inconsistent with the general sentiment in countries where slavery does not exist, that it may well be believed not to have been within the understanding of the people in incorporating the exception with the prohibitory amendment.¹

The common law of England permits the impressment of seafaring men to man the royal navy;² but this species of servitude was never recognized in the law of America.³ The citizen may doubtless be compelled to serve his country in her wars; but the common law as adopted by us has never allowed arbitrary discriminations for this purpose between persons of different avocations.

Unreasonable Searches and Seizures.

Near in importance to exemption from any arbitrary control of the person is that maxim of the common law which secures to the citizen immunity in his home against the prying eyes of the government, and protection in person, property, and papers, against even the process of the law, except in a few specified cases. The maxim that "every man's house is his castle,"⁴ is made

¹ The State has no power to imprison a child in a house of correction who has committed no crime, on a mere allegation that he is "destitute of proper parental care, and is growing up in mendicancy, ignorance, idleness, and vice." *People v. Turner*, 55 Ill. 280; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 645. Compare *Prescott v. State*, 19 Ohio, n. s. 184; s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 888.

² *Broadfoot's Case*, 18 State Trials, 1323; *Fost. Cr. Law*, 178; *Rex v. Tubbs*, Cowp. 512; *Ex parte Fox*,

5 State Trials, 276; 1 Bl. Com. 419; *Broom, Const. Law*, 116.

³ There were cases of impressment in America before the Revolution, but they were never peaceably acquiesced in by the people. See *Life and Times of Warren*, 55.

⁴ *Broom's Maxims*, 321. The eloquent passage in Chatham's speech on General Warrants is familiar: "The poorest man may, in his cottage, bid defiance to all the forces of the Crown. It may be frail; its roof may shake; the wind may blow

[* 300] a * part of our constitutional law in the clauses prohibiting unreasonable searches and seizures, and has always been looked upon as of high value to the citizen.

If in English history we inquire into the original occasion for these constitutional provisions, we shall probably find it in the abuse of executive authority, and in the unwarrantable intrusion of executive agents into the houses and among the private papers of individuals, in order to obtain evidence of political offences either committed or designed. The final overthrow of this practice is so clearly and succinctly stated in a recent work on the constitutional history of England that we cannot refrain from copying the account in the note below.¹

through it; the storm may enter; the rain may enter; but the king of England may not enter; all his force dares not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement." And see Lieber on Civil Liberty and Self-Government, c. 6.

¹ "Among the remnants of a jurisprudence which had favored prerogative at the expense of liberty was that of the arrest of persons under general warrants, without previous evidence of their guilt or identification of their persons. This practice survived the Revolution, and was continued without question, on the ground of usage, until the reign of George III., when it received its death-blow from the boldness of Wilkes and the wisdom of Lord Camden. This question was brought to an issue by No. 45 of the 'North Briton,' already so often mentioned. There was a libel, but who was the libeller? Ministers knew not, nor waited to inquire, after the accustomed forms of law; but forthwith Lord Halifax, one of the secretaries of state, issued a warrant, directing four messengers, taking with them a constable, to search for the authors, printers, and publishers; and to apprehend and seize them, together with their papers, and bring them in safe custody before him. No one

having been charged or even suspected, — no evidence of crime having been offered, — no one was named in this dread instrument. The offence only was pointed at, not the offender. The magistrate who should have sought proofs of crime deputed this office to his messengers. Armed with their roving commission, they set forth in quest of unknown offenders; and, unable to take evidence, listened to rumors, idle tales, and curious guesses. They held in their hands the liberty of every man whom they were pleased to suspect. Nor were they triflers in their work. In three days they arrested no less than forty-nine persons on suspicion, — many as innocent as Lord Halifax himself. Among the number was Dryden Leach, a printer, whom they took from his bed at night. They seized his papers, and even apprehended his journeymen and servants. He had printed one number of the 'North Briton,' and was then reprinting some other numbers; but as he happened not to have printed No. 45, he was released without being brought before Lord Halifax. They succeeded, however, in arresting Kearsley the publisher, and Balfe the printer, of the obnoxious number, with all their workmen. From them it was discovered that Wilkes was the culprit

* The history of this controversy should be read in [* 301] connection with that in America immediately previous to

of whom they were in search; but the evidence was not on oath; and the messengers received verbal directions to apprehend Wilkes under the general warrant. Wilkes, far keener than the crown lawyers, not seeing his own name there, declared it 'a ridiculous warrant against the whole English nation,' and refused to obey it. But after being in custody of the messengers for some hours, in his own house, he was taken away in a chair, to appear before the secretaries of state. No sooner had he been removed than the messengers, returning to his house, proceeded to ransack his drawers; and carried off all his private papers, including even his will and his pocket-book. When brought into the presence of Lord Halifax and Lord Egremont, questions were put to Wilkes which he refused to answer; whereupon he was committed close prisoner to the Tower, denied the use of pen and paper, and interdicted from receiving the visits of his friends or even of his professional advisers. From this imprisonment, however, he was shortly released on a writ of *habeas corpus*, by reason of his privilege as a member of the House of Commons.

"Wilkes and the printers, supported by Lord Temple's liberality, soon questioned the legality of the general warrant. First, several journeymen printers brought action against the messengers. On the first trial, Lord Chief Justice *Pratt* — not allowing bad precedents to set aside the sound principles of English law — held that the general warrant was illegal; that it was illegally executed; and that the messengers were not indemnified by statute. The journeymen recovered three hundred pounds damages; and the other plaintiffs also obtained verdicts. In all these cases,

however, bills of exceptions were tendered and allowed. Mr. Wilkes himself brought an action against Mr. Wood, under-secretary of state, who had personally superintended the execution of the warrant. At this trial it was proved that Mr. Wood and the messengers, after Wilkes's removal in custody, had taken entire possession of his house, refusing admission to his friends; had sent for a blacksmith, who opened the drawers of his bureau; and having taken out the papers, had carried them away in a sack, without taking any list or inventory. All his private manuscripts were seized, and his pocket-book filled up the mouth of the sack. Lord Halifax was examined, and admitted that the warrant had been made out three days before he had received evidence that Wilkes was the author of the 'North Briton.' Lord Chief Justice *Pratt* thus spoke of the warrant: 'The defendant claimed a right, under precedents, to force persons' houses, break open escritaires, and seize their papers upon a general warrant, where no inventory is made of the things thus taken away, and where no offenders' names are specified in the warrant, and therefore a discretionary power given to messengers to search wherever their suspicions may chance to fall. If such a power is truly invested in a secretary of state, and he can delegate this power, it certainly may affect the person and property of every man in this kingdom, and is totally subversive of the liberty of the subject.' The jury found a verdict for the plaintiff with one thousand pounds damages.

"Four days after Wilkes had obtained his verdict against Mr. Wood, Dryden Leach, the printer, gained another verdict, with four hundred pounds damages, against the messen-

[* 302] the American Revolution, * in regard to writs of assistance issued by the courts to the revenue officers, empow-

gers. A bill of exceptions, however, was tendered and received in this as in other cases, and came on for hearing before the Court of King's Bench in 1765. After much argument and the citing of precedents showing the practice of the secretary of state's office ever since the Revolution, Lord *Mansfield* pronounced the warrant illegal, saying: 'It is not fit that the judging of the information should be left to the discretion of the officer. The magistrate should judge, and give certain directions to the officer.' The other three judges agreed that the warrant was illegal and bad, 'believing that no degree of antiquity can give sanction to an usage bad in itself.' The judgment was therefore affirmed.

“ Wilkes had also brought actions for false imprisonment against both the secretaries of state. Lord Egremont's death put an end to the action against him; and Lord Halifax, by pleading privilege, and interposing other delays unworthy of his position and character, contrived to put off his appearance until after Wilkes had been outlawed, when he appeared and pleaded the outlawry. But at length, in 1769, no further postponement could be contrived; the action was tried, and Wilkes obtained no less than four thousand pounds damages. Not only in this action, but throughout the proceedings, in which persons aggrieved by the general warrant had sought redress, the government offered an obstinate and vexatious resistance. The defendants were harassed by every obstacle which the law permitted, and subjected to ruinous costs. The expenses which government itself incurred in these various actions were said to have amounted to one hundred thousand pounds.

“ The liberty of the subject was further assured at this period by another remarkable judgment of Lord *Camden*. In November, 1762, the Earl of Halifax, as secretary of state, had issued a warrant directing certain messengers, taking a constable to their assistance, to search for John Entinck, clerk, the author or one concerned in the writing of several numbers of the 'Monitor, or British Freeholder,' and to seize him, together with his books and papers, and bring him in safe custody before the secretary of state. In execution of this warrant, the messengers apprehended Mr. Entinck in his house, and seized the books and papers in his bureau, writing-desk, and drawers. This case differed from that of Wilkes, as the warrant specified the name of the person against whom it was directed. In respect of the person, it was not a general warrant; but as regards the papers, it was a general search-warrant, — not specifying any particular papers to be seized, but giving authority to the messengers to take all his books and papers according to their discretion.

“ Mr. Entinck brought an action of trespass against the messengers for the seizure of his papers, upon which a jury found a special verdict, with three hundred pounds damages. This special verdict was twice learnedly argued before the Court of Common Pleas, where, at length, in 1765, Lord *Camden* pronounced an elaborate judgment. He even doubted the right of the secretary of state to commit persons at all, except for high treason; but in deference to prior decisions, the court felt bound to acknowledge the right. The main question, however was the legality of a search-warrant for papers. 'If this point should be determined in favor

ering them, in their discretion, to search *suspected [* 303] places for smuggled goods, and which Otis pronounced “the worst instrument of arbitrary power, the most destructive of English liberty and the fundamental principles of law, that ever was found in an English law book;” since they placed “the liberty of every man in the hands of every petty officer.”¹ All these matters are now a long way in the past; but it has not been deemed unwise to repeat in the State constitutions, as well as in the Constitution of the United States,² the principles

of the jurisdiction,’ said Lord *Camden*, ‘the secret cabinets and bureaus of every subject in this kingdom will be thrown open to the search and inspection of a messenger, whenever the secretary of state shall see fit to charge, or even to suspect, a person to be the author, printer, or publisher, of a seditious libel.’ This power, so assumed by the secretary of state, is an execution upon all the party’s papers in the first instance. His house is rifled; his most valuable papers are taken out of his possession, before the paper, for which he is charged, is found to be criminal by any competent jurisdiction, and before he is convicted either of writing, publishing, or being concerned in the paper.’ It had been found by the special verdict that many such warrants had been issued since the Revolution; but he wholly denied their legality. He referred the origin of the practice to the Star Chamber, which in pursuit of libels had given search-warrants to their messenger of the press; a practice which, after the abolition of the Star Chamber, had been revived and authorized by the licensing act of Charles II., in the person of the secretary of state. And he conjectured that this practice had been continued after the expiration of that act,—a conjecture shared by Lord *Mansfield* and the Court of King’s Bench. With the unanimous concurrence of the other judges of his court, this eminent magistrate now

finally condemned this dangerous and unconstitutional practice.” May’s *Constitutional History of England*, c. 11. See also *Semayne’s Case*, 5 Coke, 91; 1 *Smith’s Lead. Cas.* 183; *Entinck v. Carrington*, 2 Wils. 275, and 19 *State Trials*, 1030; Note to same case in *Broom, Const. Law*, 613; *Money v. Leach*, Burr. 1742; *Wilkes’s Case*, 2 Wils. 151, and 19 *State Trials*, 1405. For debates in Parliament on the same subject, see *Hansard’s Debates*, Vol. XV. p. 1393–1418; Vol. XVI. pp. 6 and 209. In further illustration of the same subject, see *De Lolme on the English Constitution*, c. 18; *Story on Const.* §§ 1901, 1902; *Bell v. Clapp*, 10 Johns. 263; *Sailly v. Smith*, 11 Johns. 500.

¹ *Works of John Adams*, Vol. II. pp. 523, 524; 2 *Hildreth’s U. S.* 499; 4 *Bancroft’s U. S.* 414; *Quincy, Mass. Reports*, 51. See also the appendix to these reports, p. 395, for a history of writs of assistance. In the case of *People v. Smith*, before *McAllister, J.*, at Chambers, reported in *Chicago Legal News*, Vol. VI. p. 392, a statute was declared void which permitted the issue of criminal warrants without a showing of probable cause.

² U. S. Const. 4th Amendment. The scope of this work does not call for any discussion of the searches of private premises, and seizures of books and papers, which are made under the authority, or claim of authority, of the revenue laws of the

already settled in the common law upon this vital point in civil liberty.

For the service of criminal process, the houses of private parties are subject to be broken and entered under circumstances which are fully explained in the works on criminal law, and need not be enumerated here. And there are also cases where search-warrants are allowed to be issued, under which an officer may be protected in the like action. But as search-warrants are a species of process exceedingly arbitrary in character, and which ought not to be resorted to except for very urgent and satisfactory reasons, the rules of law which pertain to them are of more than ordinary strictness; and if the party acting under them expects legal protection, it is essential that these rules be carefully observed.

[* 304] * In the first place, they are only to be granted in the cases expressly authorized by law; and not generally in such cases until after a showing made before a judicial officer, under oath, that a crime has been committed, and that the party complaining has reasonable cause to suspect that the offender, or the property which was the subject or the instrument of the crime, is concealed in some specified house or place.¹ And the law, in requiring a showing of reasonable cause for suspicion, intends that evidence shall be given of such facts as shall satisfy the magistrate that the suspicion is well founded; for the suspicion itself is no ground for the warrant except as the facts justify it.²

In the next place, the warrant which the magistrate issues must particularly specify the place to be searched, and the object for which the search is to be made. If a building is to be searched, the name of the owner or occupant should be given;³ or, if not occupied, it should be particularly described, so that the officer will be left to no discretion in respect to the place; and a misde-

United States. Perhaps, under no other laws are such liberties taken by ministerial officers; and it would be surprising to find oppressive action on their part so often submitted to without legal contest, if the facilities they possess to embarrass, annoy, and obstruct the merchant in his business were not borne in mind. The federal decisions, however, go very far to establish the doctrine that, in matters of revenue, the regulations Congress

sees fit to establish, however unreasonable they may seem, must prevail. For a very striking case, see *Henderson's Distilled Spirits*, 14 Wall. 44.

¹ 2 Hale, P. C. 142; Bishop, Cr. Pro. §§ 716-719; Archbold, Cr. Law, 147.

² *Commonwealth v. Lottery Tickets*, 5 Cush. 369; *Else v. Smith*, 1 D. & R. 97.

³ *Stone v. Dana*, 5 Met. 98.

scription in regard to the ownership,¹ or a description so general that it applies equally well to several buildings or places, would render the warrant void in law.² Search-warrants are always obnoxious to very serious objections; and very great particularity is justly required in these cases, before the privacy of a man's premises is allowed to be invaded by the minister of the law.³ And therefore a designation of goods to be searched for as "goods, wares, and merchandises," without more particular description, has been regarded as insufficient, even in the case of goods supposed to be smuggled,⁴ where there is usually greater difficulty in giving description, and where consequently more latitude should be permitted than in the case of property stolen.

* Lord *Hale* says, "It is fit that such warrants to [* 305] search do express that search be made in the daytime; and though I do not say they are unlawful without such restriction, yet they are very inconvenient without it; for many times, under pretence of searches made in the night, robberies and burglaries have been committed, and at best it creates great disturbance."⁵ And the statutes upon this subject will generally be found to provide for searches in the daytime only, except in very special cases.

The warrant should also be directed to the sheriff or other proper officer, and not to private persons; though the party complainant may be present for the purposes of identification,⁶ and other assistance can lawfully be called in by the officer if necessary.

The warrant must also command that the goods or other articles to be searched for, if found, together with the party in whose

¹ *Sandford v. Nichols*, 13 Mass. 286; *Allen v. Staples*, 6 Gray, 491.

² Thus, a warrant to search the "houses and buildings of Hiram Ide and Henry Ide," is too general. *Humes v. Tabor*, 1 R. I. 464. See *McGlinchy v. Barrows*, 41 Me. 74; *Ashley v. Peterson*, 25 Wis. 621. So a warrant for the arrest of an unknown person under the designation of John Doe, without further description, is void. *Commonwealth v. Crotty*, 10 Allen, 403.

³ A warrant for searching a dwelling-house will not justify a forcible entry into a barn adjoining the dwelling-house. *Jones v. Fletcher*, 41 Me. 254; *Downing v. Porter*, 8 Gray, 539; *Bishop, Cr. Pro.* §§ 716-719.

⁴ *Sandford v. Nichols*, 13 Mass. 286; *Archbold, Cr. Law*, 143.

⁵ 2 Hale, P. C. 150. See *Archbold, Cr. Law* (7th ed.), 145.

⁶ 2 Hale, P. C. 150; *Archbold, Cr. Law* (7th ed.), 145.

custody they are found, be brought before the magistrate, to the end that, upon further examination into the facts, the goods, and the party in whose custody they were, may be disposed of according to law.¹ And it is a fatal objection to such a warrant, that it leaves the disposition of the goods searched for to the ministerial officer, instead of requiring them to be brought before the magistrate, that he may pass his judgment upon the truth of the complaint made; and it would also be a fatal objection to a statute authorizing such a warrant, if it permitted a condemnation or other final disposition of the goods, without notice to the claimant, and without an opportunity for a hearing being afforded him.²

The warrant is not allowed for the purpose of obtaining evidence of an intended crime; but only after lawful evidence of an offence actually committed.³ Nor even then is it allowable to invade one's privacy for the sole purpose of obtaining [* 806] evidence against him,⁴ *except in a few special cases where that which is the subject of the crime is supposed to be concealed, and the public or the complainant has an interest in it or in its destruction. Those special cases are familiar and well understood in the law. Search-warrants have heretofore been allowed to search for stolen goods, for goods supposed to have been smuggled into the country in violation of the revenue laws, for implements of gaming or counterfeiting, for lottery tickets or prohibited liquors kept for sale contrary to law, for obscene books and papers kept for sale or circulation, and for

¹ 2 Hale, P. C. 150; *Bell v. Clapp*, 10 Johns. 263; *Hibbard v. People*, 4 Mich. 126; *Fisher v. McGirr*, 1 Gray, 1.

² The "Search and Seizure," clause in some of the prohibitory liquor laws was held void on this ground. *Fisher v. McGirr*, 1 Gray, 1; *Greene v. Briggs*, 1 Curtis, 311; *Hibbard v. People*, 4 Mich. 126. See also *Matter of Morton*, 10 Mich. 208; *Sullivan v. Oneida*, 61 Ill. 242; *State v. Snow*, 3 R. I. 64, for a somewhat similar principle.

³ We do not say that it would be incompetent to authorize, by statute, the issue of search-warrants for the

prevention of offences in some cases: but it is difficult to state any case in which it might be proper, except in such cases of attempts, or of preparations to commit crime, as are in themselves criminal.

⁴ The fourth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, found also in many State constitutions, would clearly preclude the seizure of one's papers in order to obtain evidence against him; and the spirit of the fifth amendment—that no person shall be compelled in a criminal case to give evidence against himself—would also forbid such seizure.

powder or other explosive and dangerous material so kept as to endanger the public safety.¹ A statute which should permit the breaking and entering a man's house, and the examination of books and papers with a view to discover the evidence of crime, might possibly not be void on constitutional grounds in some other cases; but the power of the legislature to authorize a resort to this process is one which can properly be exercised only in extreme cases, and it is better oftentimes that crime should go unpunished than that the citizen should be liable to have his premises invaded, his desks broken open, his private books, letters, and papers exposed to prying curiosity, and to the misconstructions of ignorant and suspicious persons; and all this under the direction of a mere ministerial officer, who brings with him such assistants as he pleases, and who will select them more often with reference to physical strength and courage than to their sensitive regard to the rights and feelings of others. To incline against the enactment of such laws is to incline to the side of safety.² In principle they are *objection- [* 307]

¹ These are the most common cases, but in the following search-warrants are also sometimes provided for by statute: books and papers of a public character, retained from their proper custody; females supposed to be concealed in houses of ill-fame; children enticed or kept away from parents or guardians; concealed weapons; counterfeit money, and forged bills or papers. See cases under English statutes specified in 4 Broom and Hadley's Commentaries, 332.

² Instances sometimes occur in which ministerial officers take such liberties, in endeavoring to detect and punish offenders, as are even more criminal than the offences they seek to punish. The employment of spies and decoys to lead men on to the commission of crime, on the pretence of bringing criminals to justice, cannot be too often or too strongly condemned; and that prying into private correspondence by officers, which has sometimes been permitted by post-masters, is directly in the face of the

law, and cannot be excused. The importance of public confidence in the inviolability of correspondence through the post-office cannot well be overrated; and the proposition to permit letters to be opened, at the discretion of a ministerial officer, would excite general indignation. In Maine it has been decided that a telegraph operator may be compelled to disclose the contents of a message sent by him for another party, and that no rule of public policy would forbid. *State v. Litchfield*, 58 Me. 267. The case is treated as if no other considerations were involved than those which arise in the ordinary case of a voluntary disclosure by one private person to another, without necessity. Such, however, is not the nature of the communication made to the operator of the telegraph. That instrument is used as a means of correspondence, and as a valuable, and in many cases an indispensable, substitute for the postal facilities; and the communication is made, not because

able; in the mode of execution they are necessarily odious; and they tend to invite abuse and to cover the commission of crime. We think it would generally be safe for the legislature to regard all those searches and seizures "unreasonable" which have hitherto been unknown to the law, and on that account to abstain from authorizing them; leaving parties and the public to the accustomed remedies.¹

the party desires to put the operator in possession of facts, but because transmission without it is impossible. It is not voluntary in any other sense than this, that the party makes it rather than deprive himself of the benefits of this great invention and improvement. The reasons of a public nature for maintaining the secrecy of telegraphic communication are the same with those which protect correspondence by mail; and though the operator is not a public officer, that circumstance appears to us immaterial. He fulfils an important public function, and the propriety of his preserving inviolable secrecy in regard to communications is so obvious, that it is common to provide statutory penalties for disclosures. If on grounds of public policy the operator should not voluntarily disclose, why do not the same considerations forbid the courts compelling him to do so? Or if it be proper to make him testify to the correspondence by telegraph, what good reason can be given why the postmaster should not be made subject to the process of subpoena for a like purpose, and compelled to bring the correspondence which passes through his hands into court, and open it for the purposes of evidence? This decision has been followed in some other cases. *Henisler v. Freedman*, 2 Pars. Sel. Cas (Penn.) 274; *First National Bank of Wheeling v. Merchants' National Bank*, 7 West Va. 544.

We should suppose, were it not for the opinions to the contrary by tribunals so eminent, that the public could

not be entitled to a man's private correspondence, whether obtainable by seizing it in the mails, or by compelling the operator of the telegraph to testify to it, or by requiring his servants to take from his desks his private letters and journals, and bring them into court on *subpœna duces tecum*. Any such compulsory process to obtain it seems a most arbitrary and unjustifiable seizure of private papers; such an "unreasonable seizure" as is directly condemned by the Constitution. In England, the secretary of state sometimes issues his warrant for opening a particular letter, where he is possessed of such facts as he is satisfied would justify him with the public; but no American officer or body possesses such authority, and its usurpation should not be tolerated. For an account of the former and present English practice on this subject, see May, *Constitutional History*, c. 11; Todd, *Parliamentary Government*, Vol. I. p. 272; Broom, *Const. Law*, 615.

¹ A search-warrant for libels and other papers of a suspected party was illegal at the common law. See 11 State Trials, 313, 321; Archbold, *Cr. Law* (7th ed.), 141; *Wilkes v. Wood*, 19 State Trials, 1153. "Search-warrants were never recognized by the common law as processes which might be availed of by individuals in the course of civil proceedings, or for the maintenance of any mere private right; but their use was confined to the case of public prosecutions instituted and pursued for the suppression of crime, and the detection and pun-

We have said that if the officer follows the command of his warrant, he is protected; and this is so even when the complaint proves to have been unfounded.¹ But if he exceed the command by * searching in places not described therein, [* 308] or by seizing persons or articles not commanded, he is not protected by the warrant, and can only justify himself as in other cases where he assumes to act without process.² Obeying strictly the command of his warrant, he may break open outer or inner doors, and his justification does not depend upon his discovering that for which he is to make search.³

In other cases than those to which we have referred, and subject to the general police power of the State, the law favors the complete and undisturbed dominion of every man over his own premises, and protects him therein with such jealousy that he may defend his possession against intruders, in person or by his servants or guests, even to the extent of taking the life of the intruder, if that seem essential to the defence.⁴

ishment of criminals. Even in those cases, if we may rely on the authority of Lord Coke, their legality was formerly doubted; and Lord Camden said that they crept into the law by imperceptible practice. But their legality has long been considered to be established, on the ground of public necessity; because without them felons and other malefactors would escape detection." *Merrick, J.*, in *Robinson v. Richardson*, 13 Gray, 456. "To enter a man's house," said Lord Camden, "by virtue of a nameless warrant, in order to procure evidence, is worse than the Spanish Inquisition; a law under which no Englishman would wish to live an hour." See his opinion in *Entinck v. Carrington*, 19 State Trials, 1029; s. c. 2 Wils. 275, and *Broom, Const. Law*, 558; *Huckle v. Money*, 2 Wils. 205; *Leach v. Money*, 19 State Trials, 1001; s. c. 3 Burr. 1692; and 1 W. Bl. 555; note to *Entinck v. Carrington*, *Broom, Const. Law*, 613.

¹ *Barnard v. Bartlett*, 10 Cush. 501.

² *Crozier v. Cudney*, 9 D. & R.

224; Same case, 6 B. & C. 232; *State v. Brennan's Liquors*, 25 Conn. 278.

³ 2 Hale, P. C. 151; *Barnard v. Bartlett*, 10 Cush. 501.

⁴ That in defence of himself, any member of his family, or his dwelling, a man has a right to employ all necessary violence, even to the taking of life, see *Shorter v. People*, 2 N. Y. 193; *Yates v. People*, 32 N. Y. 509; *Logue v. Commonwealth*, 38 Penn. St. 265; *Pond v. People*, 8 Mich. 150; *Maher v. People*, 24 Ill. 241; *Bohannon v. Commonwealth*, 8 Bush, 481; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 474. But except where a forcible felony is attempted against person or property, he should avoid such consequences if possible, and cannot justify standing up and resisting to the death, when the assailant might have been avoided by retreat. *People v. Sullivan*, 7 N. Y. 396. But a man assaulted in his dwelling is under no obligation to retreat; his house is his castle, which he may defend to any extremity. And this means not simply the dwelling-house proper, but includes whatever is within the curtilage as

Quartering Soldiers in Private Houses.

A provision is found incorporated in the constitution of nearly every State, that "no soldier shall in time of peace be quartered in any house without the consent of the owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law." To us, after four-fifths of a century have passed away since occasion has existed for complaint of the action of the government in this particular, the repetition of this declaration seems to savor of idle form and ceremony; but "a frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles of the Constitution" can never be unimportant, and indeed may well be regarded as "absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty, and to maintain a free government."¹ It is difficult to imagine a more terrible engine of oppression than the power in the executive to fill the house of an obnoxious person with a company of soldiers, who are to be fed and warmed at his expense, under the direction of an officer accustomed to the exercise of arbitrary power, and in whose presence the ordinary laws of courtesy, not less than the civil restraints

which protect person and property, must give way to [* 309] unbridled will; who is sent as an instrument of *pun-

ishment, and with whom insult and outrage may appear quite in the line of his duty. However contrary to the spirit of the age such a proceeding may be, it may always be assumed as possible that it may be resorted to in times of great excitement, when party action is generally violent; and "the *dragonades* of Louis XIV. in France, of James II. in Scotland, and those of more recent and present date in certain countries, furnish sufficient justification of this specific guaranty."² The clause, as we find it in the national and State constitutions, has

understood at the common law. *Pond v. People*, 8 Mich. 150. And in deciding what force it is necessary to employ in resisting the assault, a person must act upon the circumstances as they appear to him at the time; and he is not to be held criminal because on a calm survey of the facts afterwards it appears that the force employed in defence was excessive. See the cases above cited; also

Schiner v. People, 23 Ill. 17; *Patten v. People*, 18 Mich. 314; *Henton v. State*, 24 Tex. 454.

¹ Constitutions of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Florida, Illinois, and North Carolina. See also Constitutions of Virginia, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, for a similar declaration.

² Lieber, *Civil Liberty and Self-Government*, c. 11.

come down to us through the Petition of Right, the Bill of Rights of 1688, and the Declaration of Independence; and it is but a branch of the constitutional principle, that the military shall in time of peace be in strict subordination to the civil power.¹

Criminal Accusations.

Perhaps the most important of the protections to personal liberty consists in the mode of trial which is secured to every person accused of crime. At the common law, accusations of felony were made in the form of an indictment by a grand jury; and this process is still retained in many of the States,² while others have substituted in its stead an information filed by the prosecuting officer of the State or county. The mode of investigating the facts, however, is the same in all; and this is through a trial by jury, surrounded by certain safeguards which are a well-understood part of the system, and which the government cannot dispense with.

First, we may mention that the humanity of our law always presumes an accused party innocent until he is proved to be guilty. This is a presumption which attends all the proceedings against him, from their initiation until they result in a verdict, which either finds the party guilty or converts the presumption of innocence into an adjudged fact.³

¹ Story on the Constitution, §§ 1899, 1900; Rawle on Constitution, 126. In exceptional cases, however, martial law may be declared and enforced, whenever the ordinary legal authorities are unable to maintain the public peace, and suppress violence and outrage. Todd, Parliamentary Government in England, Vol. I. p. 342; 1 Bl. Com. 413-415. As to martial law in general, see *Ex parte Milligan*, 4 Wall. 129.

² The indictment, to accomplish the purpose of the constitutional requirement, should set out the material facts charged against the accused. *State v. O'Flaherty*, 7 Nev. 153. This, however, would not preclude the legislature from establishing forms, provided they furnished such reasonable

information as would apprise the accused of the charge he was to meet.

³ See *Sullivan v. Oneida*, 61 Ill. 242. It is sometimes claimed that where insanity is set up as a defence in a criminal case, the defendant takes upon himself the burden of proof to establish it, and that he must make it out beyond a reasonable doubt. See *Clark v. State*, 12 Ohio, 494; *Loeffner v. State*, 10 Ohio, n. s. 599; *Bond v. State*, 23 Ohio, n. s. 346; *State v. Felton*, 32 Iowa, 49; *McKenzie v. State*, 42 Geo. 334; *Boswell v. Commonwealth*, 20 Grat. 860. Other well-considered cases do not support this view. The burden of proof, it is held, rests throughout upon the prosecution to establish all the conditions of guilt; and the

If there were any mode short of confinement which would, with reasonable certainty, insure the attendance of the accused to answer the accusation, it would not be justifiable to inflict upon him that indignity, when the effect is to subject him, in a greater or less degree, to the punishment of a guilty person, while as yet it is not determined that he has committed any crime. If the punishment on conviction cannot exceed in severity the forfeiture of a large sum of money, then it is reasonable to suppose that such a sum of money, or an agreement [*310] by responsible * parties to pay it to the government in case the accused should fail to appear, would be sufficient security for his attendance; and therefore, at the common law, it was customary to take security of this character in all cases of misdemeanor; one or more friends of the accused undertaking for his appearance for trial, and agreeing that a certain sum of money should be levied of their goods and chattels, lands and tenements, if he made default. But in the case of felonies, the privilege of giving bail before trial was not a matter of right; and in this country, although the criminal code is much more merciful than it formerly was in England, and in some cases the allowance of bail is almost a matter of course, there are others in which it is discretionary with the magistrate to allow it or not, and where it will sometimes be refused if the evidence of guilt is strong or the presumption great. Capital offences are not generally regarded as bailable; at least, after indictment, or when the party is charged by the finding of a coroner's jury;¹ and this upon the supposition that one who may be subjected to the terrible punishment that would follow a conviction, would not for any mere pecuniary considerations remain to abide the judgment.² And where the death penalty is abolished and imprisonment for life substituted, it is believed that the rule would be the

presumption of innocence that all the while attends the prisoner entitles him to an acquittal, if the jury are not reasonably satisfied of his guilt. See *State v. Marler*, 2 Ala. 43; *Commonwealth v. Myers*, 7 Met. 500; *Polk v. State*, 19 Ind. 170; *Chase v. People*, 40 Ill. 352; *People v. Schryver*, 42 N. Y. 1; *Stevens v. State*, 31 Ind. 485; *State v. Pike*, 49 N. H. 399; *State v. Jones*, 50 N. H. 349; *People*

v. McCann, 16 N. Y. 58; *Commonwealth v. Kimball*, 24 Pick. 373; *Commonwealth v. Dana*, 2 Met. 340; *Hopps v. People*, 31 Ill. 385; *People v. Garbutt*, 17 Mich. 23; *State v. Klinger*, 43 Mo. 127; *State v. Hundley*, 46 Mo. 414.

¹ *Matter of Barronet*, 1 El. & Bl. 1; *Ex parte Tayloe*, 5 Cow. 39.

² *State v. Summons*, 19 Ohio, 139.

same notwithstanding this change, and bail would still be denied in the case of the highest offences, except under very peculiar circumstances.¹ In the case of other felonies it is not usual to refuse bail, and in some of the State constitutions it has been deemed important to make it a matter of right in all cases except on capital charges “when the proof is evident or the presumption great.”²

When bail is allowed, *unreasonable bail* is not to be required; * but the constitutional principle that demands [* 811] this is one which, from the very nature of the case, addresses itself exclusively to the judicial discretion and sense of justice of the court or magistrate empowered to fix upon the amount. That bail is reasonable which, in view of the nature of the offence, the penalty which the law attaches to it, and the probabilities that guilt will be established on the trial, seems no more than sufficient to secure the party's attendance. In determining this, some regard should be had to the prisoner's pecuniary circumstances; that which is reasonable bail to a man of wealth, being equivalent to a denial of right if exacted of a poor man charged with the like offence. When the court or magistrate requires greater security than in his judgment is needful to secure attendance, and keeps the prisoner in confinement for failure to give it, it is plain that the right to bail which the constitution attempts so carefully to secure has been disregarded; and though the wrong is one for which, in the nature of the case, no remedy exists, the violation of constitutional privilege is aggravated, instead of being diminished, by that circumstance.³

The presumption of innocence is an absolute protection against

¹ The courts have power to bail, even in capital cases. *United States v. Hamilton*, 3 Dall. 18; *United States v. Jones*, 3 Wash. 224; *State v. Rockafellow*, 1 Halst. 332; *Commonwealth v. Semmes*, 11 Leigh, 665; *Commonwealth v. Archer*, 6 Grat. 705; *People v. Smith*, 1 Cal. 9; *People v. Van Horne*, 8 Barb. 158. In England, when all felonies were capital, it was discretionary with the courts to allow bail before trial. 4 Bl. Com. 297, and note.

² The constitutions of a majority of the States now contain provisions

to this effect. And see *Foley v. People*, Breese, 31; *Ullery v. Commonwealth*, 8 B. Monr. 3; *Shore v. State*, 6 Mo. 640; *State v. Summons*, 19 Ohio, 139; *Ex parte Wray*, 30 Miss. 673; *Moore v. State*, 36 Miss. 137; *Ex parte Banks*, 28 Ala. 89.

³ The magistrate in taking bail exercises an authority essentially judicial. *Regina v. Badger*, 4 Q. B. 468; *Linford v. Fitzroy*, 13 Q. B. 240. As to his duty to look into the nature of the charge and the evidence to sustain it, see *Barronet's Case*, 1 El. & Bl. 1.

conviction and punishment, except either, *first*, on confession in open court; or, *second*, on proof which places the guilt beyond any reasonable doubt. Formerly, if a prisoner arraigned for felony stood mute wilfully, and refused to plead, a terrible mode was resorted to for the purpose of compelling him to do so; and this might even end in his death:¹ but a more merciful proceeding is now substituted; the court entering a plea of not guilty for a party who, for any reason, fails to plead for himself.

Again, it is required that the trial be *speedy*; and here also the injunction is addressed to the sense of justice and sound judgment of the court. In this country, where officers are specially appointed or elected to represent the people in these prosecutions, their position gives them an immense power for oppression; and it is to be feared they do not always sufficiently appreciate the responsibility, and wield the power with due regard to the legal rights and privileges of the accused.² When a person charged with crime is willing to proceed at once to trial, no delay on the part of the prosecution is reasonable, except only that which is necessary for proper preparation and to secure the attendance of * witnesses.³ Very much, however, must be left to the judgment of the prosecuting officer in these

¹ 4 Bl. Com. 324. In treason, petit felony, and misdemeanors, wilfully standing mute was equivalent to a conviction, and the same punishment might be imposed; but in other cases there could be no trial or judgment without plea; and an accused party might therefore sometimes stand mute and suffer himself to be pressed to death, in order to save his property from forfeiture. Poor Giles Corey, accused of witchcraft, was perhaps the only person ever pressed to death for refusal to plead in America. 3 Bancroft's U. S. 93; 2 Hildreth's U. S. 160. For English cases, see Cooley's Bl. Com. 325, note. Now in England the court enters a plea of not guilty for a prisoner refusing to plead, and the trial proceeds as in other cases.

² It is the duty of the prosecuting attorney to treat the accused with ju-

dicial fairness; and to inflict injury at the expense of justice is no part of the purpose for which he is chosen. Unfortunately, however, we sometimes meet with cases in which these officers appear to regard themselves as the counsel for the complaining party rather than the impartial representative of public justice. But we trust it is not often that cases occur like a recent one in Tennessee, in which the Supreme Court felt called upon to set aside a verdict in a criminal case, where by the artifice of the prosecuting officer the prisoner had been induced to go to trial under the belief that certain witnesses for the State were absent, when in fact they were present and kept in concealment by this functionary. *Curtis v. State*, 6 Cold. 9.

³ See this discussed in *Ex parte Stanley*, 4 Nev. 113.

cases; and the court would not compel the government to proceed to trial at the first term after indictment found or information filed, if the officer who represents it should state, under the responsibility of his official oath, that he was not and could not be ready at that time.¹ But further delay would not generally be allowed without a more specific showing of the causes which prevent the State proceeding to trial, including the names of the witnesses, the steps taken to procure them, and the facts expected to be proved by them, in order that the court might judge of the reasonableness of the application, and that the prisoner might, if he saw fit to take that course, secure an immediate trial by admitting that the witnesses, if present, would testify to the facts which the prosecution have claimed could be proved by them.²

It is also requisite that the trial be *public*. By this is not meant that every person who sees fit shall in all cases be permitted to attend criminal trials; because there are many cases where, from the character of the charge, and the nature of the evidence by which it is to be supported, the motives to attend the trial on the part of portions of the community would be of the worst character, and where a regard to public morals and public decency would require that at least the young be excluded from hearing and witnessing the evidences of human depravity which the trial must necessarily bring to light. The requirement of a public trial is for the benefit of the accused; that the public may see he is fairly dealt with and not unjustly condemned, and that the presence of interested spectators may keep his triers keenly alive to a sense of their responsibility and to the importance of their functions; and the requirement is fairly observed, if, without partiality or favoritism, a reasonable proportion of the public is suffered to attend, notwithstanding that those persons whose presence could be of no service to the accused, and who would only be drawn thither by a prurient curiosity, are excluded altogether.

* But a far more important requirement is that the [* 313]

¹ *Watts v. State*, 26 Geo. 231.

² The Habeas Corpus Act, 31 Ch. II. c. 2, § 1, required a prisoner charged with crime to be released on bail, if not indicted the first term after the commitment, unless the king's witnesses could not be ob-

tained; and that he should be brought to trial as early as the second term after the commitment. The principles of this statute are considered as having been adopted into the American common law. *Post*, p. *345.

proceeding to establish guilt shall not be inquisitorial. A peculiar excellence of the common-law system of trial over that which has prevailed in other civilized countries, consists in the fact that the accused is never compelled to give evidence against himself. Much as there was in that system that was heartless and cruel, it recognized fully the dangerous and utterly untrustworthy character of extorted confessions, and was never subject to the reproach that it gave judgment upon them.¹

It is the law in some of the States, when a person is charged with crime, and is brought before an examining magistrate, and the witnesses in support of the charge have been heard, that the prisoner may also make a statement concerning the transaction charged against him, and that this may be used against him on the trial if supposed to have a tendency to establish guilt. But the prisoner is to be first cautioned that he is under no obligation to answer any question put to him unless he chooses, and that whatever he says and does must be entirely voluntary.² He is also to be allowed the presence and advice of counsel; and if that privilege is denied him it may be sufficient reason for discrediting any damaging statements he may have made.³ When, however, the statute has been complied with, and no species of coercion

¹ See Lieber's paper on Inquisitorial Trials, Appendix to Civil Liberty and Self-Government. Also the article on Criminal Procedure in Scotland and England, *Edinb. Review*, Oct. 1858. And for an illustration of inquisitorial trials in our own day, see Trials of Troppman and Prince Pierre Bonaparte, *Am. Law Review*, Vol. V. p. 14. Judge Foster relates from Whitelocke, that the bishop of London having said to Felton, who had assassinated the Duke of Buckingham, "If you will not confess, you must go to the rack," the man replied, "If it must be so, I know not whom I may accuse in the extremity of my torture,—Bishop Laud, perhaps, or any lord of this board." "Sound sense," adds Foster, "in the mouth of an enthusiast and ruffian." Laud having proposed the rack, the matter was shortly debated

at the board, and it ended in a reference to the judges, who unanimously resolved that the rack could not be legally used. DeLolme on Constitution of England (ed. of 1807), p. 181, note; 4 Bl. Com. 325; Broom, Const. Law, 148; Trial of Felton, 3 State Trials, 368, 371; Fortesq. De Laud. c. 22, and note by Amos; Brodie, Const. Hist. c. 8. A legislative body has no more right than a court to make its examination of parties or witnesses inquisitorial. Emery's Case, 107 Mass. 172.

² See Rev. Stat. of New York, Pt. 4, c. 2, tit. 2, §§ 14–16.

³ *Rex v. Ellis, Ry. & Mood.* 432. However, there is no absolute right to the presence of counsel, or to publicity in these preliminary examinations, unless given by statute. *Cox v. Coleridge*, 1 B. & C. 37.

appears to have been employed, the statement the prisoner may have made is evidence which can be used against him on his trial, and is generally entitled to great weight.¹ And in any other case * except treason² the confession of the ac- [* 314] cused may be received in evidence to establish his guilt, provided no circumstance accompanies the making of it which should detract from its weight in producing conviction.

But to make it admissible in any case it ought to appear that it was made voluntarily, and that no motives of hope or fear were employed to induce the accused to confess.³ The evidence ought to be clear and satisfactory that the prisoner was neither threatened nor cajoled into admitting what very possibly was untrue. Under the excitement of a charge of crime, coolness and self-possession are to be looked for in very few persons; and however strongly we may reason with ourselves that no one will confess a heinous offence of which he is not guilty, the records of criminal courts bear abundant testimony to the contrary. If confessions could prove a crime beyond doubt, no act which was ever punished criminally would be better established than witchcraft;⁴

¹ It should not, however, be taken on oath, and if it is, that will be sufficient reason for rejecting it. *Rex v. Smith*, 1 Stark. 242; *Rex v. Webb*, 4 C. & P. 564; *Rex v. Lewis*, 6 C. & P. 161; *Rex v. River*, 7 C. & P. 177; *Regina v. Pikesley*, 9 C. & P. 124; *People v. McMahon*, 15 N. Y. 384. "The view of the English judges, that an oath, even where a party is informed he need answer no questions unless he pleases, would, with most persons, overcome that caution, is, I think, founded on good reason and experience. I think there is no country—certainly there is none from which any of our legal notions are borrowed—where a prisoner is ever examined on oath." *People v. Thomas*, 9 Mich. 318, per *Campbell*, J.

² In treason there can be no conviction unless on the testimony of two witnesses to the same overt act, or on confession in open court. Const. of United States, art. 3, § 3.

³ See *Smith v. Commonwealth*,

10 Grat. 734; *Shifflet v. Commonwealth*, 14 Grat. 652; *Page v. Commonwealth*, 27 Grat. 954; *Williams v. Commonwealth*, 27 Grat. 997; *United States v. Cox*, 1 Cliff. 5, 21; *Jordan's Case*, 32 Miss. 382; *Runnels v. State*, 28 Ark. 121; *Commonwealth v. Holt*, 121 Mass. 61; *Miller v. People*, 39 Ill. 457.

⁴ See *Mary Smith's Case*, 2 Howell's State Trials, 1049; *Case of Essex Witches*, 4 Howell's State Trials, 817; *Case of Suffolk Witches*, 6 Howell's State Trials, 647; *Case of Devon Witches*, 8 Howell's State Trials, 1017. It is true that torture was employed freely in cases of alleged witchcraft, but the delusion was one which often seized upon the victims as well as their accusers, and led the former to freely confess the most monstrous and impossible actions. Much curious and valuable information on this subject may be found in "Superstition and Force," by Lea; "A Physician's Problems," by Elam; and Leckey, *History of Rationalism*.

and the judicial executions which have been justified by such confessions ought to constitute a solemn warning against the too ready reliance upon confessions as proof of guilt in any case. As "Mr. Justice *Parke* several times observed" while holding one of his circuits, "too great weight ought not to be attached to evidence of what a party has been supposed to have said, as it very frequently happens, not only that the witness has misunderstood what the party has said, but that by unintentionally altering a few of the expressions really used, he gives an effect to the statement completely at variance with what the party really did say."¹ And when the admission is full and positive, it perhaps quite as often happens that it has been made under the influence of the terrible fear excited by the charge, and in the [* 315] hope that confession may ward *off some of the consequences likely to follow if guilt were persistently denied.

A confession alone ought not to be sufficient evidence of the *corpus delicti*. There should be other proof that a crime has actually been committed; and the confession should only be allowed for the purpose of connecting the defendant with the offence.² And if the party's hopes or fears are operated upon to induce him to make it, this fact will be sufficient to preclude the confession being received; the rule upon this subject being so strict that even saying to the prisoner it will be better for him to confess, has been decided to be a holding out of such inducements to confession, especially when said by a person having a prisoner in custody, as should render the statement ob- [* 316] tained by means of it inadmissible.³ If, however, *state-

¹ Note to *Earle v. Picken*, 5 C. & P. 542. See also 1 Greenl. Ev. § 214, and note; *Commonwealth v. Curtis*, 97 Mass. 574; *Derby v. Derby*, 21 N. J. Eq. 36; *State v. Chambers*, 39 Iowa, 179.

² In *Stringfellow v. State*, 26 Miss. 157, a confession of murder was held not sufficient to warrant conviction, unless the death of the person alleged to have been murdered was shown by other evidence. In *People v. Hennessey*, 15 Wend. 147, it was decided that a confession of embezzlement by a clerk would not warrant a conviction where that constituted the sole evi-

dence that an embezzlement had been committed. So on an indictment for blasphemy, the admission by the defendant that he spoke the blasphemous charge, is not sufficient evidence of the uttering. *People v. Porter*, 2 Park. Cr. R. 14. And see *State v. Guild*, 5 Halst. 163; *Long's Case*, 1 Hayw. 524; *People v. Lambert*, 5 Mich. 349; *Ruloff v. State*, 18 N. Y. 179.

³ *Rex v. Enoch*, 5 C. & P. 539; *State v. Bostick*, 4 Harr. 563; *Boyd v. State*, 2 Humph. 390; *Morehead v. State*, 9 Humph. 635; *Commonwealth v. Taylor*, 5 Cush. 605; *Rex v. Par-*

ments have been made before the confession, which were likely to do away with the effect of the inducements, so that the

tridge, 7 C. & P. 551; Commonwealth v. Curtis, 97 Mass. 574; State v. Staley, 14 Minn. 105; Frain v. State, 40 Geo. 529; Austine v. State, 51 Ill. 236; People v. Phillips, 42 N. Y. 200; State v. Brockman, 46 Mo. 566; Commonwealth v. Mitchell, 117 Mass. 431; Commonwealth v. Sturtivant, 117 Mass. 122. Mr. Phillips states the rule thus: "A promise of benefit or favor, or threat or intimation of disfavor, connected with the subject of the charge, held out by a person having authority in the matter, will be sufficient to exclude a confession made in consequence of such inducements, either of hope or fear. The prosecutor, or prosecutor's wife or attorney, or the prisoner's master or mistress, or a constable, or a person assisting him in the apprehension or custody, or a magistrate acting in the business, or other magistrate, has been respectively looked upon as having authority in the matter; and the same principle applies if the principle has been held out by a person without authority, in the presence of a person who has such authority, and with his sanction, either express or implied." 1 Phil. Ev. by Cowen, Hill, and Edwards, 544, and cases cited. But we think the better reason is in favor of excluding confessions where inducements have been held out by any person, whether acting by authority or not. Rex v. Simpson, 1 Mood. C. C. 410; State v. Guild, 5 Halst. 163; Spears v. State, 2 Ohio, n. s. 583; Commonwealth v. Knapp, 9 Pick. 496; Rex v. Clewes, 4 C. & P. 221; Rex v. Kingston, 4 C. & P. 387; Rex v. Dunn, 4 C. & P. 543; Rex v. Walkley, 6 C. & P. 175; Rex v. Thomas, 6 C. & P. 353. "The reason is, that in the agitation of mind in which the party charged is supposed to be, he is liable to be influ-

enced by the hope of advantage or fear of injury to state things which are not true." Per Morton, J., in Commonwealth v. Knapp, 9 Pick. 496; People v. McMahon, 15 N. Y. 387. There are not wanting many opposing authorities, which proceed upon the idea, that "a promise made by an indifferent person, who interfered officiously without any kind of authority, and promised without the means of performance, can scarcely be deemed sufficient to produce any effect, even on the weakest mind, as an inducement to confess." 1 Greenl. Ev. § 223. No supposition could be more fallacious; and in point of fact a case can scarcely occur in which some one, from age, superior wisdom or experience, or from his relations to the accused or to the prosecutor, would not be likely to exercise more influence upon his mind than some of the persons who are regarded as "in authority" under the rule as stated by Mr. Phillips. Mr. Greenleaf thinks that, while as a rule of law all confessions made to persons in authority should be rejected, "promises and threats by private persons, not being found so uniform in their operation, perhaps may, with more propriety, be treated as mixed questions of law and fact; the principle of law, that a confession must be voluntary, being strictly adhered to, and the question, whether the promises or threats of the private individuals who employed them were sufficient to overcome the mind of the prisoner, being left to the discretion of the judge under all the circumstances of the case." 1 Greenl. Ev. § 223. This is a more reasonable rule than that which admits such confessions under all circumstances; but it is impossible for a judge to say whether inducements, in a particular case,

accused cannot be supposed to have acted under their influence, the confession may be received in evidence;¹ but the showing ought to be very satisfactory on this point before the court should presume that the prisoner's hopes did not still cling to, or his fears dwell upon, the first inducements.²

Before prisoners were allowed the benefit of assistance from counsel on trials for high crimes, it was customary for them to

have influenced the mind or not; if their nature were such that they were calculated to have that effect, it is safer, and more in accordance with the human principles of our criminal law, to presume, in favor of life and liberty, that the confessions were "forced from the mind by the flattery of hope, or by the torture of fear" (per *Eyre*, C. B., *Warickshall's Case*, 1 Leach, C. C. 299), and exclude them altogether. This whole subject is very fully considered in note to 2 Leading Criminal Cases, 182. And see Whart. Cr. Law, § 686 *et seq.* The cases of *People v. McMahon*, 15 N. Y. 385, and *Commonwealth v. Curtis*, 97 Mass. 574, have carefully considered the general subject. In the second of these, the prisoner had asked the officer who made the arrest, whether he had better plead guilty, and the officer had replied that "as a general thing it was better for a man who was guilty to plead guilty, for he got a lighter sentence." After this he made statements which were relied upon to prove guilt. These statements were not allowed to be given in evidence. Per *Foster*, J.: "There is no doubt that any inducement of temporal fear or favor coming from one in authority, which preceded and may have influenced a confession, will cause it to be rejected, unless the confession is made under such circumstances as to show that the influence of the inducement had passed away. No cases require more careful scrutiny than those of disclosures made by the party under arrest to

the officer who has him in custody, and in none will slighter threats or promises of favor exclude the subsequent confessions. *Commonwealth v. Taylor*, 5 Cush. 610; *Commonwealth v. Tuckerman*, 10 Gray, 193; *Commonwealth v. Morey*, 1 Gray, 461. 'Saying to the prisoner that it will be the worse for him if he does not confess, or that it will be the better for him if he does, is sufficient to exclude the confession, according to constant experience.' 2 Hale, P. C. 659; 1 Greenl. Ev. § 219; 2 Bennett and Heard's Lead. Cr. Cas. 164; *Ward v. State*, 50 Ala. 120. Each case depends largely on its own special circumstances. But we have before us an instance in which the officer actually held out to the defendant the hope and inducement of a lighter sentence if he pleaded guilty. And a determination to plead guilty at the trial, thus induced, would naturally lead to an immediate disclosure of guilt." And the court held it an unimportant circumstance that the advice of the officer was given at the request of the prisoner, instead of being volunteered.

¹ *State v. Guild*, 5 Halst. 163; *Commonwealth v. Harman*, 4 Penn. St. 269; *State v. Vaigneur*, 5 Rich. 391; *Rex v. Cooper*, 5 C. & P. 535; *Rex v. Howes*, 6 C. & P. 404; *Rex v. Richards*, 5 C. & P. 318; *Thompson v. Commonwealth*, 20 Grat. 724.

² See *State v. Roberts*, 1 Dev. 259; *Rex v. Cooper*, 5 C. & P. 535; *Thompson v. Commonwealth*, 20 Grat. 724; *State v. Lowhorne*, 66 N. C. 538.

make such statements as they saw fit concerning the charge against them, during the progress of the trial, or after the evidence for the prosecution was put in ; and upon these statements the prosecuting officer or the court would sometimes ask questions, which the accused might answer or not at his option. And although this practice has now become obsolete, yet if the accused in any case should manage or assist in his own defence, and should claim the right of addressing the jury, it would be difficult to confine him to "the record" as the counsel may be confined in his *argument. A disposition has been manifested of [* 317] late to allow the accused to give evidence in his own behalf ; and statutes to that effect are in existence in some of the States, the operation of which is believed to have been generally satisfactory.¹ These statutes, however, cannot be so construed as to authorize compulsory process against an accused to compel him to disclose more than he chooses ; they do not so far change the old system as to establish an inquisitorial process for obtaining evidence ; they confer a privilege, which the defendant may use at his option. If he does not choose to avail himself of it, unfavorable inferences are not to be drawn to his prejudice from that circumstance ;² and if he does testify, he is at liberty to stop

¹ See American Law Register, Vol. V. n. s. pp. 129, 705 ; *Ruloff v. People*, 45 N. Y. 213.

² *People v. Tyler*, 36 Cal. 522 ; *State v. Cameron*, 40 Vt. 555. For a case resting upon an analogous principle, see *Carne v. Litchfield*, 2 Mich. 340. A different view would seem to be taken in Maine. See *State v. Bartlett*, 55 Me. 200. The views of the court are thus stated in the recent case of *State v. Cleaves*, 59 Me. 298. The judge below had instructed the jury that the fact that the defendant did not go upon the stand to testify was a proper matter to be taken into consideration by them in determining the question of her guilt or innocence. This instruction was sustained. *Appleton*, Ch. J. "It has been urged that this view of the law places the prisoner in an embarrassed condition. Not so. The embarrassment of the pris-

oner, if embarrassed, is the result of his own previous misconduct, not of the law. If innocent, he will regard the privilege of testifying as a boon justly conceded. If guilty, it is optional with the accused to testify or not, and he cannot complain of the election he may make. If he does not avail himself of the privilege of contradiction or explanation, it is his fault if by his own misconduct or crime he has placed himself in such a situation that he prefers any inferences which may be drawn from his refusal to testify, to those which must be drawn from his testimony, if truly delivered. The instruction given was correct, and in entire accordance with the conclusions to which, after mature deliberation, we have arrived. *State v. Bartlett*, 55 Me. 200 ; *State v. Lawrence*, 57 Me. 375."

In *People v. Tyler*, 36 Cal. 522, 529, *Sawyer*, Ch. J., expresses the con-

at any point he chooses, and it must be left to the jury to give a statement, which he declines to make a full one, such weight as,

trary view as follows: "At the trial, by his plea of not guilty, the party charged denies the charge against him. This is itself a positive act of denial, and puts upon the people the burden of affirmatively proving the offence alleged against him. When he has once raised this issue by his plea of not guilty, the law says he shall thenceforth be deemed innocent till he is proved to be guilty; and both the common law and the statute give him the benefit of any reasonable doubt arising on the evidence. Now if at the trial, when for all the purposes of the trial the burden is on the people to prove the offence charged by affirmative evidence, and the defendant is entitled to rest upon his plea of not guilty, an inference of guilt could legally be drawn from his declining to go upon the stand as a witness, and again deny the charge against him in the form of testimony, he would practically if not theoretically, by his act declining to exercise his privilege, furnish evidence of his guilt that might turn the scale and convict him. In this mode he would indirectly and practically be deprived of the option which the law gives him, and of the benefit of the provision of the law and the Constitution, which say in substance that he shall not be compelled to criminate himself. If the inference in question could be legally drawn, the very act of exercising his option, as to going upon the stand as a witness, which he is necessarily compelled by the adoption of the statute to exercise one way or the other, would be at least to the extent of the weight given by the jury to the inference arising from his declining to testify a crimination of himself. Whatever the ordinary rule of evidence with reference to inferences to be drawn from the failure

of parties to produce evidence that must be in their power to give, we are satisfied that the defendant, with respect to exercising his privilege under the provisions of the act in question, is entitled to rest in silence and security upon his plea of not guilty, and that no inference of guilt can be properly drawn against him from his declining to avail himself of the privilege conferred upon him to testify in his own behalf; that to permit such an inference would be to violate the principles and the spirit of the Constitution and the statute, and defeat rather than promote the object designed to be accomplished by the innovation in question." See also *Commonwealth v. Bonner*, 97 Mass. 587; *Commonwealth v. Morgan*, 107 Mass. 109; *Commonwealth v. Nichols*, 114 Mass. 285; s. c. 19 Am. Rep. 346; *Bird v. State*, 50 Geo. 585. In New York and Ohio, by statute, unfavorable inferences are not allowed to be drawn from the fact of the defendant not offering himself as a witness. See *Brandon v. People*, 42 N. Y. 265; *Connors v. People*, 50 N. Y. 240; *Stover v. People*, 56 N. Y. 315; *Calkins v. State*, 18 Ohio, n. s. 366.

In *Devries v. Phillips*, 63 N. C. 53, the Supreme Court of North Carolina held it not admissible for counsel to comment to the jury on the fact that the opposite party did not come forward to be sworn as a witness as the statute permitted. In Michigan the wife of an accused party may be sworn as a witness with his assent; but it has been held that his failure to call her was not to subject him to inferences of guilt, even though the case was such that, if his defence was true, his wife must have been cognizant of the facts. *Knowles v. People*, 15 Mich. 408.

under the circumstances, they think it entitled to;¹ otherwise the statute must have set aside and overruled the constitutional maxim which protects an accused party against being compelled to testify against himself, and the statutory privilege becomes a snare and a danger.²

¹ In *State v. Ober*, 52 N. H. 459; s. c. 13 Am. Rep. 88, the defendant was put on trial for an illegal sale of liquors; and, having offered himself as a witness, was asked on cross-examination a question directly relating to the sale. He declined to answer, on the ground *that it might tend to criminate him*. Being convicted, it was alleged for error that the court suffered the prosecuting officer to comment on this refusal to the jury. The Supreme Court held this no error. This ruling is in entire accord with the practice which has prevailed without question in Michigan, and which has always assumed that the right of comment, where the party makes himself his own witness, and then refuses to answer proper questions, was as clear as the right to exemption from unfavorable comment when he abstains from asserting his statutory privilege.

The case of *Connors v. People*, 50 N. Y. 240, is different. There the defendant, having taken the stand as a witness, objected to answer a question: but was directed by the court to do so, and obeyed the direction. This was held no error, because he had waived his privilege. If the defendant had persisted in refusing, we are not advised what action the court would have deemed it proper to take, and it is easy to conceive of serious embarrassments in such a case. Under the Michigan practice, when the court had decided the question to be a proper one, it would have been left to the defendant to answer or not at his option, but if he failed to answer what seemed to the jury a proper inquiry, it would be thought surprising

if they gave his imperfect statement much credence. On this point see further *State v. Wentworth*, 65 Me. 234; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 688.

² The statute of Michigan of 1861, p. 169, removed the common-law disabilities of parties to testify, and added, "Nothing in this act shall be construed as giving the right to compel a defendant in criminal cases to testify; but any such defendant shall be at liberty to make a statement to the court or jury, and may be cross-examined on any such statement." It has been held that this statement should not be under oath. *People v. Thomas*, 9 Mich. 314. That its purpose was to give every person on trial for crime an opportunity to make full explanation to the jury, in respect to the circumstances given in evidence which are supposed to have a bearing against him. *Annis v. People*, 13 Mich. 511. That the statement is evidence in the case, to which the jury can attach such weight as they think it entitled to. *Maher v. People*, 10 Mich. 212. That the court has no right to instruct the jury that, when it conflicts with the testimony of an unimpeached witness, they must believe the latter in preference. *Durant v. People*, 13 Mich. 351. And that the prisoner, while on the stand, is entitled to the assistance of counsel in directing his attention to any branch of the charge, that he may make explanations concerning it if he desires. *Annis v. People*, 13 Mich. 511. The prisoner does not cease to be a defendant by becoming a witness, nor forfeit rights by accepting a privilege. In *People v. Thomas*, 9 Mich. 321, *Campbell, J.*, in speaking of the

[* 318] * The testimony for the people in criminal cases can only, as a general rule, be given by witnesses who are present in court.¹ The defendant is entitled to be confronted with the witnesses against him ; and if any of them be absent from the Commonwealth, so that their attendance cannot be compelled, or if they be dead, or have become incapacitated to give evidence, there is no mode by which their statements against the prisoner can be used for his conviction. The exceptions to this rule are of cases which are excluded from its reasons by their peculiar circumstances ; but they are far from numerous. If the witness was sworn before the examining magistrate, or before a coroner, and the accused had an opportunity then to cross-examine him, or if there were a former trial on which he was sworn, it seems allowable to make use of his deposition, or of the minutes of his examination, if the witness has since deceased, or is insane, or sick and unable to testify, or has been summoned but appears to have been kept away by the opposite party.² So, also, if a

right which the statute gives to cross-examine a defendant who has made his statement, says : “ And while his constitutional right of declining to answer questions cannot be removed, yet a refusal by a party to answer any fair question, not going outside of what he has offered to explain, would have its proper weight with the jury.” See *Commonwealth v. Mullen*, 97 Mass. 547 ; *Commonwealth v. Curtis*, 97 Mass. 574 ; *Commonwealth v. Morgan*, 107 Mass. 199.

¹ *State v. Thomas*, 64 N. C. 74 ; *Goodman v. State*, Meigs, 197 ; *Jackson v. Commonwealth*, 19 Grat. 656. By the old common law, a party accused of felony was not allowed to call witnesses to contradict the evidence for the Crown ; and this seems to have been on some idea that it would be derogatory to the royal dignity to permit it. Afterwards, when they were permitted to be called, they made their statements without oath ; and it was not uncommon for both the prosecution and the court to comment upon their testimony as of

little weight because unsworn. It was not until Queen Anne's time that they were put under oath.

The rule that the prisoner shall be confronted with the witnesses against him does not preclude such documentary evidence to establish collateral facts as would be admissible under the rules of the common law in other cases. *United States v. Benner*, Baldw. 240 ; *United States v. Little*, 2 Wash. C. C. 205 ; *United States v. Ortega*, 4 Wash. C. C. 531. But the *corpus delicti* — e.g. the fact of marriage in an indictment for bigamy — cannot be proved by certificates. *People v. Lambert*, 5 Mich. 349.

² 1 Greenl. Ev. §§ 163–166 ; Bishop, Cr. Pro. §§ 520–527 ; Whart. Cr. Law, § 667 ; 2 Phil. Ev. by Cowen, Hill, and Edwards, 217, 229. Whether evidence that the witness cannot be found after diligent inquiry, or is out of the jurisdiction, would be sufficient to let in proof of his former testimony, see Bul. N. P. 239, 242 ; *Rex v. Hagan*, 8 C. & P. 167 ; *Sills v. Brown*, 9 C. & P. 601.

person is on trial for homicide, the declarations of the party whom he is charged with having killed, if made under the solemnity of a conviction that he was at the point of death, and relating to matters of fact concerning the homicide, which passed under his own observation, may be given in evidence against the accused; the condition of the party who made them being such that every motive to falsehood must be supposed to have been silenced, and the mind to be impelled by the most powerful considerations to tell the truth.¹ Not that such evidence is of very conclusive character; it is not always easy for the hearer to determine how much of the declaration related to what was seen and positively known, and how much was surmise * and suspicion only; but it is admissible from the neces- [* 319] sity of the case, and the jury must judge of the weight to be attached to it.

In cases of felony, where the prisoner's life or liberty is in peril, he has the right to be present, and must be present, during the whole of the trial, and until the final judgment. If he be absent, either in prison or by escape, there is a want of jurisdiction over the person, and the court cannot proceed with the trial, or receive the verdict, or pronounce the final judgment.² But misdemeanors may be tried in the absence of the accused.

¹ 1 Greenl. Ev. § 156; 1 Phil. Ev. by Cowen, Hill, and Edwards, 285-289; Whart. Cr. Law, §§ 669-682; Donnelly v. State, 2 Dutch. 463; Hill's Case, 2 Grat. 594; State v. Freeman, 1 Speers, 57; State v. Brunetto, 13 La. Ann. 45; Dunn v. State, 2 Pike, 229; Mose v. State, 35 Ala. 421; Brown v. State, 32 Miss. 433; Whitley v. State, 38 Geo. 70; State v. Quick, 15 Rich. 158; Jackson v. Commonwealth, 19 Grat. 656; State v. Oliver, 2 Houston, 585. This whole subject was largely considered in Morgan v. State, 31 Ind. 193; State v. Framburg, 40 Iowa, 555.

² See Andrews v. State, 2 Sneed, 550; Jacobs v. Cone, 5 S. & R. 335; Witt v. State, 5 Cold. 11; State v. Alman, 64 N. C. 364; Gladden v. State, 12 Fla. 577; Maurer v. People, 43 N. Y. 1; note to Winchell v. State, 7 Cow. 525. In capital cases

the accused stands upon all his rights, and waives nothing. *Nomaque v. People*, Breese, 145; *Dempsey v. People*, 47 Ill. 325; *People v. McKay*, 18 Johns. 217; *Burley v. State*, 1 Neb. 885. The court cannot make an order changing the venue in a criminal case in the absence of and without notice to the defendant. *Ex parte Bryan*, 44 Ala. 404. Nor in the course of the trial allow evidence to be given to the jury in his absence, even though it be that of a witness which had been previously reduced to writing. *Jackson v. Commonwealth*, 19 Grat. 656; *Wade v. State*, 12 Geo. 25. And in a capital case the record must affirmatively show the presence of the accused at the trial, and when the verdict is received and sentence pronounced. *Dougherty v. Commonwealth*, 69 Penn. St. 286.

The Traverse Jury.

Accusations of criminal conduct are tried at the common law by jury;¹ and wherever the right to this trial is guaranteed by the constitution without qualification or restriction, it must be understood as retained in all those cases which were triable by jury at the common law,² and with all the common-law incidents to a jury trial, so far, at least, as they can be regarded as tending to the protection of the accused.³

A petit, petty, or traverse jury is a body of twelve men, who are sworn to try the facts of a case, as they are presented in the

¹ It is worthy of note that all that is extant of the legislation of the Plymouth Colony for the first five years, consists of the single regulation, "that all criminal facts, and also all manner of trespasses and debts between man and man, shall be tried by the verdict of twelve honest men, to be impanelled by authority, in form of a jury, upon their oath." 1 Palfrey's New England, 340.

² Cases of contempt of court were never triable by jury; and the object of the power would be defeated in many cases if they were. The power to punish contempts summarily is incident to courts of law and equity. *Mariner v. Dyer*, 2 Me. 165; *Morrison v. McDonald*, 21 Me. 550; *State v. White*, T. U. P. Charl. 136; *Yates v. Lansing*, 9 Johns. 395; *Sanders v. Metcalf*, 1 Tenn. Ch. 419; *Clark v. People*, Breese, 340; *People v. Wilson*, 64 Ill. 195; *Oswald's Case*, 1 Dall. 319; *State v. Morrill*, 16 Ark. 384; *Gorham v. Luckett*, 6 B. Monr. 638; *State v. Woodfin*, 5 Ired. 199; *Ex parte Adams*, 25 Miss. 883; *State v. Tipton*, 1 Blackf. 166; *Middlebrook v. State*, 43 Conn. 259. Justices of the peace possess it. *Rex v. Ravel*, 1 Stra. 420; *Re Cooper*, 32 Vt. 253; *Lining v. Bentham*, 2 Bay, 8. So do the federal courts. *United States v. Hudson*, 7 Cranch, 32; *United States v. New Bedford Bridge*, 1 Wood. & M.

401. But court commissioners have no such power. *In re Remington*, 7 Wis. 613; *Haight v. Lucia*, 36 Wis. 355. Nor can the legislature confer it upon municipal councils. *Whitcomb's Case*, 120 Mass. 118. The case should be plain before the court should assume the authority to punish for contempt. *Bachelor v. Moore*, 42 Cal. 415. See *Storey v. People*, 79 Ill. 45; *Hollingsworth v. Duane*, Wall. C. C. 77; *Ex parte Bradley*, 7 Wall. 364.

³ See note to p. *410, *post*. A citizen not in the land or naval service, or in the militia in actual service, cannot be tried by court-martial or military commission, on a charge of discouraging volunteer enlistments or resisting a military conscription. *In re Kemp*, 16 Wis. 359. See *Ex parte Milligan*, 4 Wall. 2. The constitutional right of trial by jury extends to newly created offences. *Plimpton v. Somerset*, 33 Vt. 283; *State v. Peterson*, 41 Vt. 504. *Contra*, *Tims v. State*, 26 Ala. 165 [case of an inferior offence]. But not to offences against city by-laws. *McGear v. Woodruff*, 4 Vroom, 213. A provision in an excise law, authorizing the excise board to revoke licenses, is not void as violating the constitutional right of jury trial. *People v. Board of Commissioners*, 59 N. Y. 92.

evidence placed before them. Any less than this number of twelve would not be a common-law jury, and not such a jury as the Constitution guarantees to accused parties, when a less number is not allowed in express terms; and the necessity of a full panel could not be waived — at least in case of felony — even by consent.¹ The infirmity in case of a trial by jury of less than twelve, by consent, would be that the tribunal would be one unknown to the law, created by mere voluntary act of the parties; and it would in effect be an attempt to submit to a species of arbitration the question whether the accused has been guilty of an offence against the State. But in those cases which formerly were not triable by jury, if the legislature provide for such a trial now, they may doubtless create for the purpose a statutory tribunal, composed of any number of persons, and no question of constitutional power or right could arise.

Many of the incidents of a common-law trial by jury are essential elements of the right. The jury must be indifferent between the prisoner and the Commonwealth; and to secure impartiality challenges are allowed, both for cause and also peremptory without assigning cause. The jury must also be summoned *from the vicinage where the crime is sup- [* 320] posed to have been committed;² and the accused will

¹ *Work v. State*, 2 Ohio, N. S. 296; *Cancemi v. People*, 18 N. Y. 128; *Brown v. State*, 8 Blackf. 561; 2 Lead. Cr. Cas. 337; *Hill v. People*, 16 Mich. 351. And see *State v. Cox*, 3 Eng. 436; *Murphy v. Commonwealth*, 1 Met. (Ky.) 365; *Tyzee v. Commonwealth*, 2 Met. (Ky.) 1; *State v. Mansfield*, 41 Mo. 470; *Brown v. State*, 16 Ind. 496; *Opinions of Judges*, 41 N. H. 550; *Lincoln v. Smith*, 27 Vt. 328; *Dowling's Case*, 13 Miss. 664; *Tillman v. Arlles*, 13 Miss. 373; *Vaughan v. Seade*, 30 Mo. 600; *Kleinechmidt v. Dunphy*, 1 Montana, 118; *Allen v. State*, 54 Ind. 461; *State v. Everett*, 14 Minn. 447. In *Commonwealth v. Dailey*, 12 Cush. 80, it was held that, in a case of misdemeanor, the consent of the defendant that a verdict might be received from eleven jurors was binding upon

him, and the verdict was valid. In *Hill v. People*, 16 Mich. 356, it was decided that if one of the jurors called was an alien, the defendant did not waive the objection by failing to challenge him, if he was not aware of the disqualification; and if the court refused to set aside the verdict on affidavits showing these facts, the judgment upon it would be reversed on error. The case of *State v. Quarrel*, 2 Bay, 150, is *contra*. The case of *State v. Stone*, 2 Scam. 826, in which it was held competent for the court, even in a capital case, to strike off a jurymen after he was sworn, because of alienage, affords some support for *Hill v. People*.

² Offences against the United States are to be tried in the district, and those against the State in the county in which they are charged to have

thus have the benefit on his trial of his own good character and standing with his neighbors, if these he has preserved; and also of such knowledge as the jury may possess of the witnesses who may give evidence against him. He will also be able with more certainty to secure the attendance of his own witnesses. The jury must unanimously concur in the verdict. This is a very old requirement in the English common law, and it has been adhered to, notwithstanding very eminent men have assailed it as unwise and inexpedient.¹ And the jurors must be left free to act in accordance with the dictates of their judgment. The final decision upon the facts is to rest with them, and interference by the court with a view to coerce them into a verdict against their convictions, is unwarrantable and irregular. A judge is not justified

been committed; but courts are generally empowered, on the application of an accused party, to order a change of venue, where for any reason a fair and impartial trial cannot be had in the locality. It has been held incompetent to order such a change of venue on the application of the prosecution. *Kirk v. State*, 1 Cold. 344. See also *Wheeler v. State*, 24 Wis. 52; *Osborn v. State*, 24 Ark. 629. And in another case in Tennessee it was decided that a statute which permitted offences committed near the boundary line of two counties to be tried in either was an invasion of the constitutional principle stated in the text. *Armstrong v. State*, 1 Cold. 338. See also *State v. Denton*, 6 Cold. 539. But see *State v. Robinson*, 14 Minn. 447.

The case of Dana, recently decided by Judge *Blatchford*,^{*} U. S. District Judge for the southern district of New York, is of interest in this connection. The "New York Sun," of which Mr. Charles A. Dana was editor-in-chief, published an article reflecting upon the public conduct of an official at Washington. This article was claimed to be a libel. The actual offence, if any, was committed in New York; but a technical publication also took place in Washington, by the sale of papers there.

The offended party chose to have his complaint tried summarily by a police justice of the latter city, instead of submitting it to a jury required to be indifferent between the parties. A U. S. Commissioner issued a warrant for Mr. Dana's arrest in New York for transportation to Washington for trial; but Judge Blatchford treated the proceeding with little respect, and ordered Mr. Dana's discharge. *Matter of Dana*, 7 Ben. D. C. 1. It would have been a singular result of a revolution where one of the grievances complained of was the assertion of a right to send parties abroad for trial, if it should have been found that an editor might be seized anywhere in the Union and transported by a federal officer to every territory in which his paper might find its way, to be tried in each in succession for offences which consisted in a single act not actually done in any of them.

¹ For the origin of this principle, see Forsyth, *Trial by Jury*, c. 11. The requirement of unanimity does not prevail in Scotland, or on the Continent. Among the eminent men who have not approved it may be mentioned Locke and Jeremy Bentham. See Forsyth, *supra*; Lieber, *Civil Liberty and Self-Government*, c. 20.

in expressing his conviction to the jury that the defendant is guilty upon the evidence adduced.¹ Still less would he be justified in refusing to receive and record the verdict of the jury, because of its being, in his opinion, rendered in favor of the prisoner when it ought not to have been.

* He discharges his duty of giving instructions to the [* 321] jury when he informs them what in his view the law is which is applicable to the case before them, and what is essential to constitute the offence charged; and the jury should be left free and unbiassed by his opinion to determine for themselves whether the facts in evidence are such as, in the light of the instructions of the judge, make out beyond any reasonable doubt that the accused party is guilty as alleged.²

¹ A judge who urges his opinion upon the facts to the jury decides the cause, while avoiding the responsibility. How often would a jury be found bold enough to declare their opinion in opposition to that of the judge upon the bench, whose words would fall upon their ears with all the weight which experience, learning, and commanding position must always carry with them? What lawyer would care to sum up his case, if he knew that the judge, whose words would be so much more influential, was to declare in his favor, or would be bold enough to argue the facts to the jury, if he knew the judge was to declare against him? Blackstone has justly remarked that "in settling and adjusting a question of fact, where intrusted to any single magistrate, partiality and injustice have an ample field to range in; either by boldly asserting that to be proved which is not so, or by more artfully distinguishing away the remainder." 3 Bl. Com. 380. These are evils which jury trial is designed to prevent; but the effort must be vain if the judge is to control by his opinion where the law has given him no power to command. In Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, c. 181, the author justly condemns the practice with

some judges in libel cases, of expressing to the jury their belief in the defendant's guilt. On the trial of parties, charged with a libel on the Empress of Russia, Lord *Kenyon*, sneering at the late Libel Act, said: "I am bound by my oath to declare my own opinion, and I should forget my duty were I not to say to you that it is a gross libel." Upon this Lord *Campbell* remarks: "Mr. Fox's act only requires the judges to give their opinion on matters of law in libel cases as in other cases. But did any judge ever say, 'Gentlemen, I am of opinion that this is a wilful, malicious, and atrocious murder?' For a considerable time after the act passed, against the unanimous opposition of the judges, they almost all spitefully followed this course. I myself heard one judge say: 'As the legislature requires me to give my own opinion in the present case, I am of opinion that this is a diabolically atrocious libel.'" Upon this subject, see *McGuffie v. State*, 17 Geo. 497; *State v. McGinnis*, 5 Nev. 337; *Pittock v. O'Niell*, 63 Penn. St. 253; s. c. 3 Am. Rep. 544.

² The independence of the jury, with respect to the matters of fact in issue before them, was settled by *Penn's Case*, 6 Howell's State Trials,

How far the jury are to judge of the law as well as of the facts, is a question, a discussion of which we do not propose to enter upon. If it be their choice to do so, they may return specially what facts they find established by the evidence, and allow the court to apply the law to those facts, and thereby to determine whether the party is guilty or not. But they are not obliged in any case to find a special verdict; they have a right to apply for themselves the law to the facts, and to express their own opinion, upon the whole evidence, of the defendant's guilt. Where a general verdict is thus given, the jury necessarily determine in their own mind what the law of the case is;¹ and if their determination is favorable to the prisoner, no mode is known to the law in which it can be reviewed or reversed. A writ of error does not lie on behalf of the Commonwealth to reverse an acquittal, unless expressly given by statute;² nor can a new [* 322] * trial be granted in such a case;³ but neither a writ of

951, and by *Bushel's Case*, which grew out of it, and is reported in *Vaughan's Reports*, 135. A very full account of these cases is also found in *Forsyth on Trial by Jury*, 897. See *Bushel's Case* also in *Broom's Const. Law*, 120, and the valuable note thereto. *Bushel* was foreman of the jury which refused to find a verdict of guilty at the dictation of the court, and he was punished as for contempt of court for his refusal, but was released on *habeas corpus*.

¹ "As the main object of the institution of the trial by a jury is to guard accused persons against all decisions whatsoever by men intrusted with any permanent official authority, it is not only a settled principle that the opinion which the judge delivers has no weight but such as the jury choose to give it, but their verdict must besides [unless they see fit to return a special finding] comprehend the whole matter in trial, and decide as well upon the fact as upon the point of law which may arise out of it; in other words, they must pronounce both on the commission of a certain fact, and on the reason which

makes such fact to be contrary to law." *DeLolme on the Constitution of England*, c. 13. In January, 1735, *Zenger*, the publisher of *Zenger's Journal* in New York, was informed against for a libel on the governor and other officers of the king in the province. He was defended by *Hamilton*, a Quaker lawyer from Philadelphia, who relied upon the truth as a defence. The court excluded evidence of the truth as constituting no defence, but *Hamilton* appealed to the jury as the judges of the law, and secured an acquittal. *Street's Council of Revision*, 71.

² See *State v. Reynolds*, 4 Hayw. 110; *United States v. More*, 3 Cranch, 174; *People v. Dill*, 1 Scam. 257; *People v. Royal*, 1 Scam. 557; *Commonwealth v. Cummings*, 3 Cush. 212; *People v. Corning*, 2 N. Y. 9; *State v. Kemp*, 17 Wis. 669. A constitutional provision, saving "to the defendant the right of appeal" in criminal cases, does not, by implication, preclude the legislature from giving to the prosecution the same right. *State v. Tait*, 22 Iowa, 143.

³ *People v. Comstock*, 8 Wend.

error nor a motion for a new trial could reach an erroneous determination by the jury, because, as they do not give reasons for their verdict, the precise grounds for it can never be legally known, and it is always presumable that it was given in favor of the accused because the evidence was not sufficient in degree or satisfactory in character; and no one is at liberty to allege or suppose that they have disregarded the law.

Nevertheless, as it is the duty of the court to charge the jury upon the law applicable to the case, it is still an important question whether it is the duty of the jury to receive and act upon the law as given to them by the court, or whether, on the other hand, his opinion is advisory only, so that they are at liberty either to follow it if it accords with their own convictions, or to disregard it if it does not.

In one class of cases, that is to say, in criminal prosecutions for libels, it is now very generally provided by the State constitutions, or by statute, that the jury shall determine the law and the facts.¹ How great a change is made in the common

549; *State v. Brown*, 16 Conn. 54; *State v. Kanouse*, 1 Spencer, 115; *State v. Burns*, 3 Tex. 118; *State v. Taylor*, 1 Hawks, 462.

¹ See Constitutions of Alabama, Connecticut, California, Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. That of Maryland makes the jury judges of the law in all criminal cases; and the same rule is established by constitution or statute in some other States. In *Holder v. State*, 5 Geo. 444, the following view was taken of such a statute: "Our penal code declares, 'On every trial of a crime or offence contained in this code, or for any crime or offence, the jury shall be judges of the law and the fact, and shall in every case give a general verdict of guilty or not guilty, and on the acquittal of any defendant or prisoner, no new trial shall on any account be granted by the court.' Juries were, at common law, in some sense judges of the law. Having the

right of rendering a general verdict, that right involved a judgment on the law as well as the facts, yet not such a judgment as necessarily to control the court. The early commentators on the common law, notwithstanding they concede this right, yet hold that it is the duty of the jury to receive the law from the court. Thus Blackstone equivocally writes: 'And such public or open verdict may be either general, *guilty* or *not guilty*, or special, setting forth all the circumstances of the case, and praying the judgment of the court whether, for instance, on the facts stated, it be murder or manslaughter, or no crime at all. This is where they *doubt* the matter of law, and therefore *choose* to leave it to the determination of the court, though they have an unquestionable right of determining upon all the circumstances, and of finding a general verdict if they think proper so to hazard a breach of their oath,' &c. 4 Bl. Com. 361; Co. Lit. 228 a; 2 Hale, P. C. 313. Our legislature have left no doubt about this matter. The juries in

[* 323] law by these * provisions it is difficult to say, because the rule of the common law was not very clear upon the authorities ; but for that very reason, and because the law of libel was sometimes administered with great harshness, it was certainly proper and highly desirable that a definite and liberal rule should be thus established.¹

In all other cases the jury have the clear legal right to return a simple verdict of guilty or not guilty, and in so doing they necessarily decide such questions of law as well as of fact as are involved in the general question of guilt. If their view conduce to an acquittal, their verdict to that effect can neither be reviewed nor set aside. In such a case, therefore, it appears that they pass upon the law as well as the facts, and that their finding is conclusive. If, on the other hand, their view leads them to a verdict of guilty, and it is the opinion of the court that such verdict is against law, the verdict will be set aside and a new trial granted. In such a case, although they have judged of the law, the court sets aside their conclusion as improper and unwarranted. But it is clear that the jury are no more the judges of the law when they acquit than when they condemn, and the different result in the two cases comes from the merciful maxim of the common law, which will not suffer an accused party to be twice put in jeopardy for the same cause, however erroneous may have been the first acquittal. In theory, therefore, the rule

Georgia can find no special verdict at law. They are declared to be judges of the law and the facts, and are required in every case to give a general verdict of guilty or not guilty; so jealous and rightfully jealous were our ancestors of the influence of the State upon the trial of a citizen charged with crime. We are not called upon in this case to determine the relative strength of the judgment of the court and the jury, upon the law in criminal cases, and shall express no opinion thereon. We only say it is the right and duty of the court to declare the law in criminal cases as well as civil, and that it is at the same time the right of the jury to judge of the law as well as of the facts in criminal cases. I would not

be understood as holding that it is not the province of the court to give the law of the case distinctly in charge to the jury ; it is unquestionably its privilege and its duty to instruct them as to what the law is, and officially to direct their finding as to the law, yet at the same time in such way as not to limit the range of their judgment." See also *McGuffie v. State*, 17 Geo. 497 ; *Clem v. State*, 31 Ind. 480.

¹ For a condensed history of the struggle in England on this subject, see May's *Constitutional History*, c. 9. See also Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, c. 178 ; *Introduction to Speeches of Lord Erskine*, edited by James L. High ; *Forsyth's Trial by Jury*, c. 12.

of law would seem to be, that it is the duty of the *jury [* 824] to receive and follow the law as delivered to them by the court; and such is the clear weight of authority.¹

There are, however, opposing decisions,² and it is evident that the judicial prerogative to direct conclusively upon the law cannot be carried very far or insisted upon with much pertinacity, when the jury have such complete power to disregard it, without the action degenerating into something like mere scolding. Upon this subject the remarks of Mr. Justice *Baldwin*, of the Supreme Court of the United States, to a jury assisting him in the trial of a criminal charge, and which are given in the note, seem peculiarly dignified and appropriate, and at the same time to

¹ *United States v. Battiste*, 2 Sum. 240; *Stittinus v. United States*, 5 Cranch, C. C. 573; *United States v. Morris*, 1 Curt. 53; *United States v. Riley*, 5 Blatch. 206; *Montgomery v. State*, 11 Ohio, 427; *Robbins v. State*, 8 Ohio, n. s. 131; *Commonwealth v. Porter*, 10 Met. 263; *Commonwealth v. Anthes*, 5 Gray, 185; *Commonwealth v. Rock*, 10 Gray, 4; *State v. Peace*, 1 Jones, 251; *Handy v. State*, 7 Mo. 607; *Nels v. State*, 2 Tex. 280; *People v. Pine*, 2 Barb. 566; *Carpenter v. People*, 8 Barb. 603; *People v. Finnigan*, 1 Park. C. R. 147; *Safford v. People*, 1 Park. C. R. 474; *McGowan v. State*, 9 Yerg. 184; *Pleasant v. State*, 13 Ark. 360; *Montee v. Commonwealth*, 3 J. J. Marsh. 132; *Commonwealth v. Van Tuyl*,¹ Met. (Ky.) 1; *Pierce v. State*, 13 N. H. 536; *People v. Stewart*, 7 Cal. 40; *Batre v. State*, 18 Ala. 119, reviewing previous cases in the same State. "As the jury have the right, and if required by the prisoner are bound to return a general verdict of guilty or not guilty, they must necessarily, in the discharge of their duty, decide such questions of law as well as of fact as are involved in the general question, and there is no mode in which their opinions on questions of law can be reviewed by this court or any other tribunal. But this does

not diminish the obligation of the court to explain the law. The instructions of the court in matters of law may safely guide the consciences of the jury, unless they know them to be wrong; and when the jury undertake to decide the law (as they undoubtedly have the power to do) in opposition to the advice of the court, they assume a high responsibility, and should be very careful to see clearly that they are right." *Commonwealth v. Knapp*, 10 Pick. 496, cited with approval in *McGowan v. State*, 9 Yerg. 195, and *Dale v. State*, 10 Yerg. 555.

² See especially *State v. Croteau*, 23 Vt. 14, where will be found a very full and carefully considered opinion, holding that at the common law the jury are the judges of the law in criminal cases. See also *State v. Wilkinson*, 2 Vt. 280; *Doss v. Commonwealth*, 1 Grat. 557; *State v. Jones*, 5 Ala. 666; *State v. Snow*, 6 Shep. 346; *State v. Allen*, 1 McCord, 525; *Armstrong v. State*, 4 Blackf. 247; *Warren v. State*, 4 Blackf. 150; *Stocking v. State*, 7 Ind. 326; *Lynch v. State*, 9 Ind. 541; *Nelson v. State*, 2 Swan, 482; *People v. Thayers*, 1 Park. C. R. 596; *People v. Videto*, 1 Park. C. R. 603; *McPherson v. State*, 22 Geo. 478. The subject was largely discussed in *People v. Crosswell*, 3 Johns. Cas. 337.

embrace about all that can properly be said to a jury on this subject.¹

¹ "In repeating to you what was said on a former occasion to another jury, that you have the power to decide on the law as well as the facts of this case, and are not bound to find according to our opinion of the law, we feel ourselves constrained to make some explanations not then deemed necessary, but now called for from the course of the defence. You may find a general verdict of guilty or not guilty, as you think proper, or you may find the facts specially, and leave the guilt or innocence of the prisoner to the judgment of the court. If your verdict acquit the prisoner, we cannot grant a new trial, however much we may differ with you as to the law which governs the case; and in this respect a jury are the judges of the law, if they choose to become so. Their judgment is final, not because they settle the law, but because they think it not applicable, or do not choose to apply it to the case.

"But if a jury find a prisoner guilty against the opinion of the court on the law of the case, a new trial will be granted. No court will pronounce a judgment on a prisoner against what they believe to be the law. On an acquittal there is no judgment; and the court do not act, and cannot judge, there remaining nothing to act upon.

"This, then, you will understand to be what is meant by your power to decide on the law, but you will still bear in mind that it is a very old, sound, and valuable maxim in law, that the court answers to questions of law, and the jury to facts. Every day's experience evinces the wisdom of this rule." *United States v. Wilson, Baldw.* 108. We quote also from an Alabama case: "When the power of juries to find a general verdict, and consequently their right to

determine without appeal both law and fact, is admitted, the abstract question whether it is or is not their duty to receive the law from the court becomes rather a question of casuistry or conscience than one of law; nor can we think that any thing is gained in the administration of criminal justice by urging the jury to disregard the opinion of the court upon the law of the case. It must, we think, be admitted, that the judge is better qualified to expound the law, from his previous training, than the jury; and in practice, unless he manifests a wanton disregard of the rights of the prisoner,—a circumstance which rarely happens in this age of the world and in this country,—his opinion of the law will be received by the jury as an authoritative exposition, from their conviction of his superior knowledge of the subject. The right of the jury is doubtless one of inestimable value, especially in those cases where it may be supposed that the government has an interest in the conviction of the criminal; but in this country, where the government in all its branches, executive, legislative, and judicial, is created by the people, and is in fact their servant, we are unable to perceive why the jury should be invited or urged to exercise this right contrary to their own convictions of their capacity to do so, without danger of mistake. It appears to us that it is sufficient that it is admitted that it is their peculiar province to determine facts, intents, and purposes; that it is their right to find a general verdict, and consequently that they must determine the law; and whether in the exercise of this right they will distrust the court as expounders of the law, or whether they will receive the law from the court, must be left to their own dis-

* One thing more is essential to a proper protection of [* 325] accused parties, and that is, that one shall not be subject to be twice put in jeopardy * upon the same charge. One [* 326] trial and verdict must, as a general rule, protect him against any subsequent accusation of the same offence, whether the verdict be for or against him, and whether the courts are satisfied with the verdict or not. We shall not attempt in this place to collect together the great number of judicial decisions

cretion under the sanction of the oath they have taken." *State v. Jones*, 5 Ala. 672. But as to this case, see *Batre v. State*, 18 Ala. 119.

It cannot be denied that discredit is sometimes brought upon the administration of justice by juries acquitting parties who are sufficiently shown to be guilty, and where, had the trial been by the court, a conviction would have been sure to follow. In such cases it must be supposed that the jury have been controlled by their prejudices or their sympathies. However that may be, it by no means follows that because the machinery of jury trial does not work satisfactorily in every case, we must therefore condemn and abolish the system, or, what is still worse, tolerate it, and yet denounce it as being unworthy of public confidence. The remarks of Lord *Erskine*, the most distinguished jury lawyer known to English history, may be quoted as peculiarly appropriate in this connection: "It is of the nature of every thing that is great and useful, both in the animate and inanimate world, to be wild and irregular, and we must be content to take them with the alloys which belong to them, or live without them. . . . Liberty herself, the last and best gift of God to his creatures, must be taken just as she is. You might pare her down into bashful regularity, shape her into a perfect model of severe, scrupulous law; but she would then be Liberty no longer; and you must be content to die under the lash of

this inexorable justice which you have exchanged for the banners of freedom."

The province of the jury is sometimes invaded by instructions requiring them to adopt, as absolute conclusions of law, those deductions which they are at liberty to draw from a particular state of facts, if they regard them as reasonable: such as that a homicide must be presumed malicious, unless the defendant proves the contrary; which is a rule contradictory of the results of common observation; or that evidence of a previous good character in the defendant ought to be disregarded, unless the other proof presents a doubtful case; which would deprive an accused party of his chief protection in many cases of false accusations and conspiracies. See *People v. Garbutt*, 17 Mich. 9; *People v. Lamb*, 2 Keyes, 360; *State v. Henry*, 5 Jones, N. C. 66; *Harrington v. State*, 19 Ohio, N. S. 269; *Silvus v. State*, 22 Ohio, N. S. 90; *State v. Patterson*, 45 Vt. 308; *Remsen v. People*, 43 N. Y. 6. Upon the presumption of malice in homicide, the reader is referred to the Review of the Trial of Professor Webster, by Hon. Joel Parker, in the *North American Review*, No. 72, p. 178. See also, upon the functions of judge and jury respectively, the cases of *Commonwealth v. Wood*, 11 Gray, 86; *Maher v. People*, 10 Mich. 212; *Commonwealth v. Billings*, 97 Mass. 405; *State v. Patterson*, 63 N. C. 520; *State v. Newton*, 4 Nev. 410.

bearing upon the question of legal jeopardy, and the exceptions to the general rule above stated: for these the reader must be referred to the treatises on criminal law, where the subject will be found to be extensively treated. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to indicate very briefly some general principles.

A person is in legal jeopardy when he is put upon trial, before a court of competent jurisdiction, upon indictment or [* 327] information * which is sufficient in form and substance to sustain a conviction, and a jury has been charged with his deliverance.¹ And a jury is said to be thus charged when they have been impanelled and sworn.² The defendant then becomes entitled to a verdict which shall constitute a bar to a new prosecution; and he cannot be deprived of this bar by a *nolle prosequi* entered by the prosecuting officer against his will, or by a discharge of the jury and continuance of the cause.³

If, however, the court had no jurisdiction of the cause,⁴ or if

¹ Commonwealth v. Cook, 6 S. & R. 586; State v. Norvell, 2 Yerg. 24; Williams v. Commonwealth, 2 Grat. 568; People v. McGowan, 17 Wend. 386; Mounts v. State, 14 Ohio, 295; Price v. State, 19 Ohio, 423; Wright v. State, 5 Ind. 292; State v. Nelson, 26 Ind. 366; State v. Spier, 1 Dev. 491; State v. Ephraim, 2 Dev. & Bat. 162; Commonwealth v. Tuck, 20 Pick. 356; People v. Webb, 28 Cal. 467; People v. Cook, 10 Mich. 164; State v. Ned, 7 Port. 217; State v. Callendine, 8 Iowa, 288. It cannot be said, however, that a party is in legal jeopardy in a prosecution brought about by his own procurement; and a former conviction or acquittal is consequently no bar to a second indictment, if the former trial was brought about by the procurement of the defendant, and the conviction or acquittal was the result of fraud or collusion on his part. Commonwealth v. Alderman, 4 Mass. 477; State v. Little, 1 N. H. 257; State v. Green, 16 Iowa, 239. See also State v. Reed, 26 Conn. 202. And if a jury is called and sworn, and

then discharged for the reason that it is discovered the defendant has not been arraigned, this will not constitute a bar. United States v. Riley, 5 Blatch. 205. In State v. Garvey, 42 Conn. 232, it is held that a prosecution *nol. prossed* after the jury is sworn is no bar to a new prosecution, "if the prisoner does not claim a verdict, but waives his right to insist upon it." See Hoffman v. State, 20 Md. 425.

² McFadden v. Commonwealth, 23 Penn. St. 12; Lee v. State, 26 Ark. 260; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 611; O'Brian v. Commonwealth, 9 Bush, 333; s. c. 15 Am. Rep. 715.

³ People v. Barrett, 2 Caines, 304; Commonwealth v. Tuck, 20 Pick. 365; Mounts v. State, 14 Ohio, 295; State v. Connor, 5 Cold. 311; State v. Callendine, 8 Iowa, 288; Baker v. State, 12 Ohio, n. s. 214; Grogan v. State, 44 Ala. 9; State v. Alman, 64 N. C. 364; Nolan v. State, 55 Geo. 521; *contra*, Swindel v. State, 32 Tex. 102.

⁴ Commonwealth v. Goddard, 13 Mass. 455; People v. Tyler, 7 Mich. 161.

the indictment was so far defective that no valid judgment could be rendered upon it,¹ or if by any overruling necessity the jury are discharged without a verdict,² which might happen from the sickness or death of the judge holding the court,³ or of a juror,⁴ or the inability of the jury to agree upon a verdict after reasonable time for deliberation and effort;⁵ or if the term of the court as fixed by law comes to an end before the trial is finished;⁶ or the jury are discharged with the consent of the defendant expressed or implied;⁷ or if, after verdict against the accused, it has been set aside on *his motion for a new [* 328] trial or on writ of error,⁸ or the judgment thereon been arrested,⁹—in any of these cases the accused may again be put

¹ *Gerard v. People*, 3 Scam. 363; *Pritchett v. State*, 2 Sneed, 285; *People v. Cook*, 10 Mich. 164; *Mount v. Commonwealth*, 2 Duv. (Ky.) 93; *People v. McNealy*, 17 Cal. 333; *Kohlheimer v. State*, 39 Miss. 548; *State v. Kason*, 20 La. Ann. 48; *Black v. State*, 36 Geo. 447; *Commonwealth v. Bakeman*, 105 Mass. 53.

² *United States v. Perez*, 9 Wheat. 579; *State v. Ephraim*, 2 Dev. & Bat. 166; *Commonwealth v. Fells*, 9 Leigh, 620; *People v. Goodwin*, 18 Johns. 205; *Commonwealth v. Bowden*, 9 Mass. 194; *Hoffman v. State*, 20 Md. 425; *Price v. State*, 36 Miss. 533. In *State v. Wiseman*, 68 N. C. 203, the officer in charge of the jury was found to have been conversing with them in a way calculated to influence them unfavorably towards the evidence of the prosecution, and it was held that this was such a case of necessity as authorized the judge to permit a juror to be withdrawn, and that it did not operate as an acquittal.

³ *Nugent v. State*, 4 Stew. & Port. 72.

⁴ *Hector v. State*, 2 Mo. 166; *State v. Curtis*, 5 Humph. 601; *Mahala v. State*, 10 Yerg. 532; *Commonwealth v. Fells*, 9 Leigh, 613.

⁵ *People v. Goodwin*, 18 Johns. 187; *Commonwealth v. Olds*, 5 Lit. 140; *Dobbins v. State*, 14 Ohio, n. s.

493; *Miller v. State*, 8 Ind. 325; *State v. Walker*, 26 Ind. 346; *Commonwealth v. Fells*, 9 Leigh, 613; *Winsor v. The Queen*, L. R. 1 Q. B. 289; *State v. Prince*, 63 N. C. 529; *Moseley v. State*, 33 Tex. 671; *Lester v. State*, 33 Geo. 329; *Ex parte McLaughlin*, 41 Cal. 211; s. c. 10 Am. Rep. 272.

⁶ *State v. Brooks*, 3 Humph. 70; *State v. Battle*, 7 Ala. 259; *Mahala v. State*, 10 Yerg. 532; *State v. Spier*, 1 Dev. 491; *Wright v. State*, 5 Ind. 290.

⁷ *State v. Slack*, 6 Ala. 676; *Elijah v. State*, 1 Humph. 103; *Commonwealth v. Stowell*, 9 Met. 572.

⁸ And it seems, if the verdict is so defective that no judgment can be rendered upon it, it may be set aside even against the defendant's objection, and a new trial had. *State v. Redman*, 17 Iowa, 329.

⁹ *Casborus v. People*, 13 Johns. 351. But where the indictment was good, and the judgment was erroneously arrested, the verdict was held to be a bar. *State v. Norvell*, 2 Yerg. 24. See *People v. Webb*, 28 Cal. 467. So if the error was in the judgment and not in the prior proceedings, if the judgment is reversed, the prisoner must be discharged. See *post*, p. *330. But it is competent for the legislature to provide that on reversing the erroneous judgment

upon trial upon the same facts before charged against him, and the proceedings had will constitute no protection. But where the legal bar has once attached, the government cannot avoid it by varying the form of the charge in a new accusation: if the first indictment or information were such that the accused might have been convicted under it on proof of the facts by which the second is sought to be sustained, then the jeopardy which attached on the first must constitute a protection against a trial on the second.¹ And if a prisoner is acquitted on some of the counts in an indictment, and convicted on others, and a new trial is obtained on his motion, he can be put upon trial a second time on those counts only on which he was before convicted, and is for ever discharged from the others.² •

Excessive Fines and Cruel and Unusual Punishments.

It is also a constitutional requirement that excessive bail shall not be required, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Within such bounds as may be prescribed by law, the question what fine shall be imposed is one addressed to the discretion of the court. But it is a discretion to be judicially exercised; and there may be cases in which a punishment, though not beyond any limit fixed by statute, is nevertheless so clearly excessive as to be erroneous in law.³ A fine should have some refer-

in such case, the court, if the prior proceedings are regular, shall remand the case for the proper sentence. *McKee v. People*, 32 N. Y. 239. It is also competent, by statute, in the absence of express constitutional prohibition, to allow an appeal or writ of error to the prosecution, in criminal cases. See *State v. Tait*, 22 Iowa, 141. Compare *People v. Webb*, 38 Cal. 467; *State v. Lee*, 10 R. I. 494.

¹ *State v. Cooper*, 1 Green, 360; *Commonwealth v. Roby*, 12 Pick. 504; *People v. McGowan*, 17 Wend. 386; *Price v. State*, 19 Ohio, 423; *Leslie v. State*, 18 Ohio, n. s. 395; *State v. Benham*, 7 Conn. 414.

² *Campbell v. State*, 9 Yerg. 333; *State v. Kettle*, 2 Tyler, 475; *Morris v. State*, 8 S. & M. 762; *Esmon v.*

State, 1 Swan, 14; *Guenther v. People*, 24 N. Y. 100; *State v. Kattleman*, 35 Mo. 105; *State v. Ross*, 29 Mo. 39; *State v. Martin*, 30 Wis. 216; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 567; *United States v. Davenport, Deady*, 264; s. c. 1 Green, Cr. R. 429; *Stuart v. Commonwealth* (Supreme Court of Virginia), 4 Law and Equity Reporter, 288; *Johnson v. State*, 29 Ark. 31; *Barnett v. People*, 54 Ill. 331. *Contra*, *State v. Behimer*, 20 Ohio, n. s. 572. A *nolle prosequi* on one count of an indictment after a jury is called and sworn, is a bar to a new indictment for the offence charged therein. *Barker v. State*, 12 Ohio, n. s. 214.

³ The subject of cruel and unusual punishments was somewhat considered in *Barker v. People*, 3 Cow. 686,

ence to the party's ability to pay it. * By Magna Charta [* 329] a freeman was not to be amerced for a small fault, but according to the degree of the fault, and for a great crime in proportion to the heinousness of it, *saving to him his contenment*; and after the same manner a merchant, *saving to him his merchandise*. And a villein was to be amerced after the same manner, *saving to him his wainage*. The merciful spirit of these provisions addresses itself to the criminal courts of the American States through the provisions of their constitutions.

It has been decided by the Supreme Court of Connecticut that it was not competent in the punishment of a common-law offence to inflict fine and imprisonment without limitation. The precedent, it was said, cited by counsel contending for the opposite doctrine, of the punishment for a libel upon Lord Chancellor Bacon, was deprived of all force of authority by the circumstances attending it; the extravagance of the punishment being clearly referable to the temper of the times. "The common law can never require a fine to the extent of the offender's goods and chattels, or sentence of imprisonment for life. The punishment is both uncertain and unnecessary. It is no more difficult to limit the imprisonment of an atrocious offender to an adequate number of years than to prescribe a limited punishment for minor offences. And when there exists no firmly established practice, and public necessity or convenience does not imperiously demand the principle contended for, it cannot be justified by the common law, as it wants the main ingredients on which that law is founded. Indefinite punishments are fraught with danger, and ought not to be admitted unless the written law should authorize them." ¹

It is certainly difficult to determine precisely what is meant

where the opinion was expressed by Chancellor *Sanford* that a forfeiture of fundamental rights — *e. g.*, the right to jury trial — could not be imposed as a punishment, but that a forfeiture of the right to hold office might be. But such a forfeiture could not be imposed without giving a right to trial in the usual mode. *Commonwealth v. Jones*, 10 Bush, 725. In *Done v. People*, 5 Park. 364, the cruel punishments of colonial times, such as burning alive and

breaking on the wheel, were enumerated by *W. W. Campbell, J.*, who was of opinion that they must be regarded as "cruel" if not "unusual," and therefore as being now forbidden.

¹ Per *Hosmer, Ch. J.*, in *State v. Danforth*, 3 Conn. 115. *Peters, J.*, in the same case, pp. 122-124, collects a number of cases in which perpetual imprisonment was awarded at the common law, but, as his associates believed, unwarrantably. Compare *Blydenburg v. Miles*, 39 Conn. 434. *

by cruel and unusual punishments. Probably any punishment declared by statute for an offence which was punishable in the same way at the common law, could not be regarded as cruel or unusual in the constitutional sense. And probably any new statutory offence may be punished to the extent and in the mode permitted by the common law for offences of similar nature. But those degrading punishments which in any State had become obsolete before its existing constitution was adopted, we think may well be held forbidden by it as cruel and unusual. We may

well doubt the right to establish the whipping-post and [* 330] the pillory in * States where they were never recognized as instruments of punishment, or in States whose constitutions, revised since public opinion had banished them, have forbidden cruel and unusual punishments. In such States the public sentiment must be regarded as having condemned them as "cruel," and any punishment which, if ever employed at all, has become altogether obsolete, must certainly be looked upon as "unusual."

A defendant, however, in any case is entitled to have the precise punishment meted out to him which the law provides, and no other. A different punishment cannot be substituted on the ground of its being less in severity. Sentence to transportation for a capital offence would be void; and as the error in such a case would be in the judgment itself, the prisoner would be entitled to his discharge, and could not be tried again.¹ If, however, the legal punishment consists of two distinct and severable things, — as fine, and imprisonment, — the imposition of either is legal, and the defendant cannot be heard to complain that the other was not imposed also.²

The Right to Counsel.

Perhaps the privilege most important to the person accused of

¹ Bourne v. The King, 7 Ad. & El. 582; Rex v. Fletcher, Russ. & Ry. 58. 58; Lowenberg v. People, 27 N. Y. It is competent, however, to provide 336; Hartung v. People, 26 N. Y. 167; by statute that on setting aside an Elliott v. People, 13 Mich. 365; *Ex* erroneous sentence the court shall pro- parte Page, 49 Mo. 291; Christian ceed to impose the sentence which the v. Commonwealth, 5 Met. 530; *Ex* law required. Wilson v. People, 24 parte Lange, 18 Wall. 163; McDonald Mich. 410; McDonald v. State, 45 Md. v. State (Ct. Appeals Md.), 4 Am. 90. Law Times, N. S. 484. See also ² See Kane v. People, 8 Wend. Whitebread v. The Queen, 7 Q. B. 203.

crime, connected with his trial, is that to be defended by counsel. From very early days a class of men, who have made the laws of their country their special study, and who have been accepted for the confidence of the court in their learning and integrity, have been set apart as officers of the court, whose special duty it should be to render aid to the parties and the court¹ in the application of the law to legal controversies. These persons, before entering upon their employment, were to take an oath of fidelity to the courts whose officers they were, and to their clients;² and it was their special *duty to see that no wrong [* 331] was done their clients by means of false or prejudiced

¹ In *Commonwealth v. Knapp*, 9 Pick. 498, the court denied the application of the defendant that Mr. Rantoul should be assigned as his counsel, because, though admitted to the Common Pleas, he was not yet an attorney of the Supreme Court, and that court, consequently, had not the usual control over him: and, besides, counsel was to give aid to the court as well as to the prisoner, and therefore it was proper that a person of more legal experience should be assigned.

² "Every countor is chargeable by the oath that he shall do no wrong nor falsity, contrary to his knowledge, but shall plead for his client the best he can, according to his understanding." *Mirror of Justices*, c. 2, § 5. The oath in Pennsylvania, on the admission of an attorney to the bar, "to behave himself in the office of an attorney, according to the best of his learning and ability, and with all good fidelity, as well to the court as to the client; that he will use no falsehood, nor delay any man's cause, for lucre or malice," is said, by Mr. Sharswood, to present a comprehensive summary of his duties as a practitioner. *Sharswood's Legal Ethics*, p. 3. The advocate's oath, in Geneva, was as follows: "I solemnly swear, before Almighty God, to be faithful to the Republic, and to the canton of Geneva; never to depart from the

respect due to the tribunals and authorities; never to counsel or maintain a cause which does not appear to be just or equitable, unless it be the defence of an accused person; never to employ, knowingly, for the purpose of maintaining the causes confided to me, any means contrary to truth, and never seek to mislead the judges by any artifice or false statement of facts or law; to abstain from all offensive personality, and to advance no fact contrary to the honor and reputation of the parties, if it be not indispensable to the cause with which I may be charged; not to encourage either the commencement or continuance of a suit from any motives of passion or interest; nor to reject, for any consideration personal to myself, the cause of the weak, the stranger, or the oppressed." In "The Lawyer's Oath, its Obligations, and some of the Duties springing out of them," by D. Bethune Duffield, Esq., a masterly analysis is given of this oath; and he well says of it: "Here you have the creed of an upright and honorable lawyer. The clear, terse, and lofty language in which it is expressed needs no argument to elucidate its principles, no eloquence to enforce its obligations. It has in it the sacred savor of divine inspiration, and sounds almost like a restored reading from Sinai's original, but broken tablets."

witnesses, or through the perversion or misapplication of the law by the court. Strangely enough, however, the aid of this profession was denied in the very cases in which it was needed most, and it has cost a long struggle, continuing even into the present century, to rid the English law of one of its most horrible features. In civil causes and on the trial of charges of misdemeanor, the parties were entitled to the aid of counsel in eliciting the facts, and in presenting both the facts and the law to the court and jury; but when the government charged a person with treason or felony, he was denied this privilege.¹ Only [* 332] such *legal questions as he could suggest was counsel allowed to argue for him; and this was but a poor privilege to one who was himself unlearned in the law, and who, as he could not fail to perceive the monstrous injustice of the whole proceeding, would be quite likely to accept any perversion of the law that might occur in the course of it as regular and proper, because quite in the spirit that denied him a defence. Only after the Revolution of 1688 was a full defence allowed on trials for treason,² and not until 1836 was

¹ When an ignorant person, unaccustomed to public assemblies, and perhaps feeble in body or in intellect, was put upon trial on a charge which, whether true or false, might speedily consign him to an ignominious death, with able counsel arrayed against him, and all the machinery of the law ready to be employed in bringing forward the evidence of circumstances indicating guilt, it is painful to contemplate the barbarity which could deny him professional aid. Especially when in most cases he would be imprisoned immediately on being apprehended, and would thereby be prevented from making even the feeble preparations which might otherwise have been within his power. A "trial" under such circumstances would be only a judicial murder in very many cases. The spirit in which the old law was administered may be judged of from the case of Sir William Parkins, tried for high treason before Lord Holt and his associates in 1695,

after the statute 7 William III. c. 3, allowing counsel to prisoners indicted for treason, had been passed, but *one day* before it was to take effect. He prayed to be allowed counsel, and quoted the preamble to the statute that such allowance was just and reasonable. His prayer was denied, Lord *Holt* declaring that he must administer the law as he found it, and could not anticipate the operation of an act of Parliament, even by a single day. The accused was convicted and executed. See Lieber's *Hermeneutics*, c. 4, § 15; Sedgwick on *Stat. and Const. Law*, 81. In proceedings by the Inquisition against suspected heretics the aid of counsel was expressly prohibited. Lea's *Superstition and Force*, 377.

² See an account of the final passage of this bill in Macaulay's "England," Vol. IV. c. 21. It is surprising, that the effort to extend the same right to all persons accused of felony was so strenuously resisted

the same privilege extended to persons accused of [333] other felonies.¹

afterwards, and that, too, notwithstanding the best lawyers in the realm admitted its importance and justice. "I have myself," said Mr. Scarlett, "often seen persons I thought innocent convicted, and the guilty escape, for want of some acute and intelligent counsel to show the bearings of the different circumstances on the conduct and situation of the prisoner." House of Commons Debates, April 25, 1826. "It has lately been my lot," said Mr. Denman, on the same occasion, "to try two prisoners who were deaf and dumb, and who could only be made to understand what was passing by the signs of their friends. The cases were clear and simple; but if they had been circumstantial cases, in what a situation would the judge and jury be placed, when the prisoner could have no counsel to plead for him." The cases *looked* clear and simple, to Mr. Denman; but how could he know they would not have looked otherwise, had the coloring of the prosecution been relieved by a counter-presentation for the defence? See Sydney Smith's article on Counsel for Prisoners, 45 Edinb. Rev. p. 74; Works, Vol. II. p. 353. The plausible objection to extending the right was, that the judge would be counsel for the prisoner, — a pure fallacy at the best, and, with some judges, a frightful mockery. Baron *Garrow*, in a charge to a grand jury, said: "It has been truly said that, in criminal cases, judges were counsel for the prisoners. So, undoubtedly, they were, as far as they could be, to prevent undue prejudice, to guard against improper influence being excited against prisoners; but it was impossible for them

to go further than this, for they could not suggest the course of defence prisoners ought to pursue; for judges only saw the deposition so short a time before the accused appeared at the bar of their country, that it was quite impossible for them to act fully in that capacity."

If one would see how easily, and yet in what a shocking manner, a judge might pervert the law and the evidence, and act the part of both prosecutor and king's counsel, while assuming to be counsel for the prisoner, he need not go further back than the early trials in our own country, and he is referred for a specimen to the trials of Robert Tucker and others for piracy, before Chief Justice *Trott*, at Charleston, S. C., in 1718, as reported in 6 Hargrave's State Trials, 156 *et seq.* Especially may he there see how the statement of prisoners in one case, to which no credit was given for their exculpation, was used as hearsay evidence to condemn a prisoner in another case. All these abuses would have been checked, perhaps altogether prevented, had the prisoners had able and fearless counsel. But without counsel for the defence, and under such a judge, the witnesses were not free to testify, the prisoners could not safely make even the most honest explanation, and the jury, when they retired, could only feel that returning a verdict in accordance with the opinion of the judge was merely matter of form. Sydney Smith's lecture on "The judge that smites contrary to the law" is worthy of being carefully pondered in this connection. "If ever a nation was happy, if ever a nation was visibly blessed by God,

¹ By statute 6 & 7 William IV. c. 114; 4 Cooley's Bl. Com. 355; May's Const. Hist. c. 18.

[* 334] * With us it is a universal principle of constitutional law, that the prisoner shall be allowed a defence by counsel. And generally it will be found that the humanity of the law has provided that, if the prisoner is unable to employ counsel, the court may designate some one to defend him who shall be paid by the government; but when no such provision is made, it is a duty which counsel so designated owes to his profession, to the court engaged in the trial, and to the cause of humanity and justice, not to withhold his assistance nor spare his best exertions, in the defence of one who has the double misfortune to be stricken by poverty and accused of crime. No one is at liberty to decline such an appointment,¹ and few, it is to be hoped, would be disposed to do so.

In guaranteeing to parties accused of crime the right to the aid of counsel, the Constitution secures it with all its accustomed incidents. Among these is that shield of protection which is thrown around the confidence the relation of counsel and client

if ever a nation was honored abroad, and left at home under a government (which we can now conscientiously call a liberal government) to the full career of talent, industry, and vigor, we are at this moment that people, and this is our happy lot. First, the Gospel has done it, and then justice has done it; and he who thinks it his duty that this happy condition of existence may remain, must guard the piety of these times, and he must watch over the spirit of justice which exists in these times. First, he must take care that the altars of God are not polluted, that the Christian faith is retained in purity and in perfection; and then, turning to human affairs, let him strive for spotless, incorruptible justice; praising, honoring, and loving the just judge, and abhorring as the worst enemy of mankind him who is placed there to 'judge after the law, and who smites contrary to the law.' "

¹ *Vise v. Hamilton County*, 19 Ill. 18. It has been held that, in the absence of express statutory provi-

sions, counties are not obliged to compensate counsel assigned by the court to defend poor prisoners. *Bacon v. Wayne County*, 1 Mich. 461. But there are several cases to the contrary. *Webb v. Baird*, 6 Ind. 13; *Hall v. Washington County*, 2 Greene (Iowa), 473; *Carpenter v. Dane County*, 9 Wis. 277. But we think a court has a right to require the service whether compensation is to be made or not; and that counsel who should decline to perform it, for no other reason than that the law does not provide pecuniary compensation, is unworthy to hold his responsible office in the administration of justice. Said Chief Justice *Hale* in one case: "Although sergeants have a monopoly of practice in the Common Pleas, they have a right to practise, and do practise, at this bar; and if we were to assign one of them as counsel, and he was to refuse to act, we should make bold to commit him to prison." *Life of Chief Justice Hale* in *Campbell's Lives of the Chief Justices*, Vol. II.

requires, and which does not permit the disclosure by the former, even in the courts of justice, of communications which may have been made to him by the latter, with a view to pending or anticipated litigation. This is the client's privilege; the counsel cannot waive it; and the court would not permit the disclosure even if the client were not present to take the objection.¹

* Having once engaged in a cause, the counsel is not [* 385] afterwards at liberty to withdraw from it without the consent of his client and of the court; and even though he may be impressed with a belief in his client's guilt, it will nevertheless be his duty to see that a conviction is not secured contrary to the law.² The worst criminal is entitled to be judged by the laws; and if his conviction is secured by means of a perversion of the law, the injury to the cause of public justice will be more serious and lasting in its results than his being allowed to escape altogether.³

¹ The history and reason of the rule which exempts counsel from disclosing professional communications are well stated in *Whiting v. Barney*, 30 N. Y. 330. And see 1 Phil. Ev. by Cowen, Hill, and Edwards, 130 *et seq.*; *Earle v. Grant*, 46 Vt. 113; *Machette v. Wanless*, 2 Col. 169. The privilege would not cover communications made, not with a view to professional assistance, but in order to induce the attorney to aid in a criminal act. *People v. Blakely*, 1 Park. Cr. R. 176; *Bank of Utica v. Mersereau*, 3 Barb. Ch. 398. And see the analogous case of *Hewitt v. Prince*, 21 Wend. 79. Communications extraneous or impertinent to the subject-matter of the professional consultation are not privileged. *Dixon v. Parmelee*, 2 Vt. 185. See *Brandon v. Gowing*, 7 Rich. 459.

It has been intimated in New York that the statute making parties witnesses has done away with the rule which protects professional communications. *Mitchell's Case*, 12 Abb. Pr. R. 249; note to 1 Phil. Ev. by Cowen, Hill, and Edwards, p. 159 (marg.). Supposing this to be so in

civil cases, the protection would still be the same in the case of persons charged with crime, for such persons cannot be compelled to give evidence against themselves, so that the reason for protecting professional confidence is the same as formerly.

² If one would consider this duty and the limitations upon it fully, he should read the criticisms upon the conduct of Mr. Charles Phillips on the trial of Courvoisier for the murder of Lord William Russell. See Sharswood, *Legal Ethics*, 46; Littell, *Living Age*, Vol. XXIV. pp. 179, 230; Vol. XXV. pp. 289, 306; West. Rev. Vol. XXXV. p. 1.

³ There may be cases in which it will become the duty of counsel to interpose between the court and the accused, and fearlessly to brave all consequences personal to himself, where it appears to him that in no other mode can the law be vindicated and justice done to his client; but these cases are so rare, that doubtless they will stand out in judicial history as notable exceptions to the ready obedience which the bar should yield to the authority of the court. The

But how persistent counsel may be in pressing for the acquittal of his client, and to what extent he may be justified in throwing his own personal character as a weight in the scale of justice, are questions of ethics rather than of law. No counsel is justifiable who defends even a just cause with the weapons of fraud and falsehood, and no man on the other hand can excuse himself for accepting the confidence of the accused, and then betraying it by a feeble and heartless defence. And in criminal cases we think

the court may sometimes have a duty to perform in seeing [* 336] that the prisoner suffers nothing *from inattention or haste on the part of his counsel, or impatience on the part of the prosecuting officer or of the court itself. Time may be precious to the court, but it is infinitely more so to him whose

famous scene between Mr. Justice Buller and Mr. Erskine, on the trial of the Dean of St. Asaph for libel,— 5 Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, c. 158; Erskine's *Speeches*, by Jas. L. High, Vol. I. p. 242,—will readily occur to the reader as one of the exceptional cases. Lord Campbell says of Erskine's conduct: "This noble stand for the independence of the bar would alone have entitled Erskine to the statue which the profession affectionately erected to his memory in Lincoln's Inn Hall. We are to admire the decency and propriety of his demeanor during the struggle, no less than its spirit, and the felicitous precision with which he meted out the requisite and justifiable portion of defiance. His example has had a salutary effect in illustrating and establishing the relative duties of judge and advocate in England." And elsewhere, in speaking of Mr. Fox's Libel Act, he makes the following somewhat extravagant remark: "I have said, and I still think, that this great constitutional triumph is mainly to be ascribed to Lord Camden, who had been fighting in the cause for half a century, and uttered his last words in the House of Lords in its support; but had he not received the invaluable assistance of Erskine, as counsel for the Dean of

St. Asaph, the *Star Chamber* might have been re-established in this country." And Lord Brougham says of Erskine: "He was an undaunted man; he was an undaunted advocate. To no court did he ever truckle, neither to the Court of the King, neither to the Court of the King's Judges. Their smiles and their frowns he disregarded alike in the fearless discharge of his duty. He upheld the liberty of the peers against the one; he defended the rights of the people against both combined to destroy them. If there be yet amongst us the power of freely discussing the acts of our rulers; if there be yet the privilege of meeting for the promotion of needful reforms; if he who desires wholesome changes in our Constitution be still recognized as a patriot, and not doomed to die the death of a traitor,—let us acknowledge with gratitude that to this great man, under Heaven, we owe this felicity of the times." *Sketches of Statesmen of the Time of George III.* A similar instance of the independence of counsel is narrated of that eminent advocate, Mr. Samuel Dexter, in the reminiscences of his life by "Sigma," published at Boston, 1857, p. 61. See Story on Const. (4th ed.) § 1064, note.

life or whose liberty may depend upon the careful and patient consideration of the evidence, when the counsel for the defence is endeavoring to sift the truth from the falsehood, and to subject the whole to logical analysis, so as to show that how suspicious soever the facts may be, they are nevertheless consistent with innocence. Often indeed it must happen that the impression of the prisoner's guilt, which the judge and the jury unavoidably receive when the case is opened to them by the prosecuting officer, will, insensibly to themselves, color all the evidence in the case, so that only a sense of duty will induce a due attention to the summing up for the prisoner, which after all may prove unexpectedly convincing. Doubtless the privilege of counsel is sometimes abused in these cases; we cannot think an advocate of high standing and character has a right to endeavor to rob the jury of their opinion by asseverating his own belief in the innocence of his client; and cases may arise in which the court will feel compelled to impose some reasonable restraints upon the address to the jury,¹ but it is better in these cases to err on the side of liberality; and restrictions which do not leave to counsel, who are apparently acting in good faith, such reasonable time and opportunity as they may deem necessary for presenting their client's case fully, may possibly in some cases be so far erroneous in law as to warrant setting aside a verdict of guilty.²

Whether counsel are to address the jury on questions of law in criminal cases, generally, is a point which is still in dispute. If the jury in the particular case, by the constitution or statutes of the State, are judges of the law, it would seem that counsel should be allowed to address them fully upon it,³ though the contrary seems to have been held in Maryland:⁴ while in Massachusetts,

¹ Thus it has been held, that, even though the jury are the judges of the law in criminal cases, the court may refuse to allow counsel to read law books to the jury. *Murphy v. State*, 6 Ind. 490. And see *Lynch v. State*, 9 Ind. 541; *Phoenix Insurance Co. v. Allen*, 11 Mich. 501.

² In *People v. Keenan*, 13 Cal. 581, a verdict in a capital case was set aside on this ground.

³ *Lynch v. State*, 9 Ind. 541; *Murphy v. State*, 6 Ind. 490.

⁴ *Franklin v. State*, 12 Md. 236. What was held there was, that coun-

sel should not argue the constitutionality of a statute to the jury; and that the Constitution, in making the jury judges of the law, did not empower them to decide a statute invalid. This ruling corresponds to that of Judge Chase in the *United States v. Callendar*, Whart. State Trials, 688, 710. But see remarks of Perkins, J., in *Lynch v. State*, 9 Ind. 542. In Maryland, it seems to be optional with the court whether it will give the jury instructions upon the law. *Broll v. State*, 45 Md. 356.

[* 337] where it is * expected that the jury will receive the law from the court, it is nevertheless held that counsel has a right to address them upon the law.¹ It is unquestionably more decorous and more respectful to the bench that argument upon the law should always be addressed to the court; and such, we believe, is the general practice. The jury hear the argument, and they have a right to give it such weight as it seems to them properly to be entitled to.

For misconduct in their practice the members of the legal profession may be summarily dealt with by the courts, who will not fail, in all proper cases, to use their power to protect clients or the public, as well as to preserve the profession from the contamination and disgrace of a vicious associate.² A man of bad reputation may be expelled for that alone;³ and counsel who has

¹ *Commonwealth v. Porter*, 10 Met. 263; *Commonwealth v. Austin*, 7 Gray, 51.

² "As a class, attorneys are supposed to be, and in fact have always been, the vindicators of individual rights, and the fearless assertors of the principles of civil liberty, existing, where alone they can exist, in a government, not of parties nor of men, but of laws. On the other hand, to declare them irresponsible to any power but public opinion and their consciences, would be incompatible with free government. Individuals of the class may, and sometimes do, forfeit their professional franchise by abusing it; and a power to exact the forfeiture must be lodged somewhere. Such a power is indispensable to protect the court, the administration of justice, and themselves. Abuses must necessarily creep in; and having a deep stake in the character of their profession, they are vitally concerned in preventing it from being sullied by the misconduct of unworthy members of it. No class of community is more dependent on its reputation for honor and integrity. It is indispensable to the purposes of its creation to assign it a high and honorable standing; but to put it

above the judiciary, whose official tenure is good behavior, and whose members are removable from office by the legislature, would render it intractable; and it is therefore necessary to assign it but an equal share of independence. In the absence of specific provision to the contrary, the power of removal is, from its nature, commensurate with the power of appointment, and it is consequently the business of the judges to deal with delinquent members of the bar, and withdraw their faculties when they are incorrigible." *Gibson*, Ch. J., *In re Austin et al.*, 5 Rawle, 203. See *State v. Kirke*, 12 Fla. 278; *Rice's Case*, 18 B. Monr. 472; *Walker v. State*, 4 W. Va. 749.

An attorney may be disbarred for a personal attack upon the judge for his conduct as such; but the attorney is entitled to notice, and an opportunity to be heard in defence. *Beene v. State*, 22 Ark. 149. See *In re Wallace*, L. R. 1 P. C. 283; *Ex parte Bradley*, 7 Wall. 364; *Withers v. State*, 35 Ala. 252; *Matter of Moore et al.*, 63 N. C. 397; *Biggs, Ex parte*, 64 N. C. 202; *Bradley v. Fisher*, 13 Wall. 335; *Dickens's Case*, 67 Penn. St. 169.

³ For example, one whose reputa-

once taken part in litigation, and been the adviser or become intrusted with the secrets of one party, will not afterwards be suffered to engage for an opposing party, notwithstanding the original employment has ceased, and there is no imputation upon his motives.¹ And, on the * other hand, the court will [* 338] not allow counsel to be made the instrument of injustice, nor permit the client to exact of him services which are inconsistent with the obligation he owes to the court and to public justice ; a higher and more sacred obligation than any which can rest upon him to gratify a client's whims, or to assist in his revenge.²

tion for truth and veracity is such that his neighbors would not believe him when under oath. *Matter of Mills*, 1 Mich. 393. See *In re Percy*, 36 N. Y. 451 ; *People v. Ford*, 54 Ill. 520. An attorney convicted and punished for perjury, and disbarred, was refused restoration, notwithstanding his subsequent behavior had been unexceptionable. *Ex parte Garbett*, 18 C. B. 403.

¹ In *Gaulden v. State*, 11 Geo. 47, the late solicitor-general was not suffered to assist in the defence of a criminal case, because he had, in the course of his official duty, instituted the prosecution, though he was no longer connected with it. And see *Wilson v. State*, 16 Ind. 392.

² Upon this subject the remarks of Chief Justice *Gibson* in *Rush v. Cavanaugh*, 2 Penn. St. 189, are worthy of being repeated in this connection. The prosecutor in a criminal case had refused to pay the charges of the counsel employed by him to prosecute in the place of the attorney-general, because the counsel, after a part of the evidence had been put in, had consented that the charge might be withdrawn. In considering whether this was sufficient reason for the refusal, the learned judge said : " The material question is, did the plaintiff violate his professional duty to his client in consenting to withdraw his charge . . . instead of lending himself to the prosecution of one whom

he then and has since believed to be an innocent man ?

" It is a popular but gross mistake to suppose that a lawyer owes no fidelity to any one except his client, and that the latter is the keeper of his professional conscience. He is expressly bound by his official oath to behave himself in his office of attorney with all due fidelity to the court as well as to the client ; and he violates it when he consciously presses for an unjust judgment ; much more so when he presses for the conviction of an innocent man. But the prosecution was depending before an alderman, to whom, it may be said, the plaintiff was bound to no such fidelity. Still he was bound by those obligations which, without oaths, rest upon all men. The high and honorable office of a counsel would be degraded to that of a mercenary, were he compellable to do the bidding of his client against the dictates of his conscience. The origin of the name proves the client to be subordinate to the counsel as his patron. Besides, had the plaintiff succeeded in having Crean held to answer, it would have been his duty to abandon the prosecution at the return of the recognizance. As the office of attorney-general is a public trust which involves, in the discharge of it, the exercise of an almost boundless discretion by an officer who stands as impartial as a judge, it might be doubted whether counsel retained by

The Writ of Habeas Corpus.

It still remains to mention one of the principal safeguards [* 339] to personal liberty, * and the means by which illegal restraints upon it are most speedily and effectually remedied. To understand this guaranty, and the instances in which the citizen is entitled to appeal to the law for its enforcement, we must first have a correct idea of what is understood by personal liberty in the law, and inquire what restraints, if any, must exist to its enjoyment.

Sir William Blackstone says, personal liberty consists in the power of locomotion, of changing situation, or moving one's person to whatsoever place one's own inclination may direct, without imprisonment or restraint, unless by due course of law.¹ It appears, therefore, that this power of locomotion is not entirely unrestricted, but that by due course of law certain qualifications and limitations may be imposed upon it without infringing upon constitutional liberty. Indeed, in organized society, liberty is the creature of law, and every man will possess it in proportion as the laws, while imposing no unnecessary restraints, surround him and every other citizen with protections against the lawless acts of others.²

a private prosecutor can be allowed to perform any part of his duty; certainly not unless in subservience to his will and instructions. With that restriction usage has sanctioned the practice of employing professional assistants, to whom the attorney-general or his regular substitute may, if he please, confide the direction of the particular prosecution; and it has been beneficial to do so where the prosecuting officer has been overmatched or overborne by numbers. In that predicament the ends of justice may require him to accept assistance. But the professional assistant, like the regular deputy, exercises not his own discretion, but that of the attorney-general, whose *locum tenens* at sufferance he is; and he consequently does so under the obligation of the official oath." And see *Meister v. People*, 31 Mich. 99.

¹ 1 Bl. Com. 134. Montesquieu says: "In governments, that is, in societies directed by laws, liberty can consist only in the power of doing what we ought to will, and in not being constrained to do what we ought not to will. We must have continually present to our minds the difference between independence and liberty. Liberty is a right of doing whatever the laws permit, and if a citizen could do what they forbid, he would no longer be possessed of liberty, because all his fellow-citizens would enjoy the same power." *Spirit of the Laws*, Book 11, c. 3.

² "Liberty," says Mr. Webster, "is the creature of law, essentially different from that authorized licentiousness that trespasses on right. It is a legal and a refined idea, the offspring of high civilization, which the

If we examine the qualifications and restrictions which the law imposes upon personal liberty, we shall find that they range themselves in two classes; first, those of a public, and, second, those of a private nature.

The first class are those which spring from the relative duties and obligations of the citizen to society and to his fellow-citizen. These may be arranged into sub-classes as follows: 1. Those imposed to prevent the commission of crime which is threatened; 2. Those in punishment of crime committed; 3. Those in punishment of contempts of court or legislative bodies, or to render their jurisdiction effectual; 4. Those necessary to enforce the duty citizens owe in defence of the State;¹ 5. Those which may become important to protect the community against the acts of those who, by reason of mental infirmity, are incapable of self-control. All these limitations are well recognized and generally understood, but a particular discussion of them does not belong to our subject. The second class are those which spring from the helpless or dependent condition of individuals in the various relations of life.

1. The husband, at the common law, is recognized as having legal custody of and power of control over the wife, with the right to direct as to her labor, and to insist upon its performance. The precise nature of the restraints which may be imposed by the husband upon the wife's actions, it is not easy, from the nature of the case, to point out and define; but at most they can only be such gentle restraints upon her liberty as improper conduct on her part may appear to render necessary;² and the general tendency of

savage never understood and never can understand. Liberty exists in proportion to wholesome restraint; the more restraint on others to keep off from us, the more liberty we have. It is an error to suppose that liberty consists in a paucity of laws. If one wants few laws, let him go to Turkey. The Turk enjoys that blessing. The working of our complex system, full of checks and restraints on legislative, executive, and judicial power, is favorable to liberty and justice. Those checks and restraints are so many safeguards set around individual rights and interests. That man is free who

is protected from injury." Works, Vol. II. p. 393.

¹ In *Judson v. Reardon*, 16 Minn. 431, a statute authorizing the members of a municipal council to arrest and imprison without warrant persons refusing to obey the orders of fire wardens at a fire was held unwarranted and void.

² 2 Kent, 181. See *Cochran's Case*, 8 Dowl. P. C. 630. The husband, however, is under no obligation to support his wife except at his own home; and it is only when he wrongfully sends her away, or so conducts himself as to justify her in leaving

public sentiment, as well as of the modern decisions, has been in the direction of doing away with the arbitrary power which the husband was formerly supposed to possess, and of placing [* 340] the two sexes in the marriage relation upon * a footing nearer equality. It is believed that the right of the husband to chastise the wife, under any circumstances, would not be recognized in this country ; and such right of control as the law gives him would in any case be forfeited by such conduct towards the wife as was not warranted by the relation, and which should render it improper for her to live and cohabit with him, or by such conduct as, under the laws of the State, would entitle her to a divorce.¹ And he surrenders his right of control also, when he consents to her living apart under articles of separation.²

2. The father of an infant, being obliged by law to support his child, has a corresponding right to control his actions and to employ his services during the continuance of legal infancy. The child may be emancipated from this control before coming of age, either by the express assent of the father, or by being turned away from his father's house and left to care for himself ;³ though in neither case would the father be released from an obligation which the law imposes upon him to prevent the child becoming a public charge, and which the State may enforce whenever necessary. The mother, during the father's life, has a power of control subordinate to his ; but on his death⁴ or conviction and sentence to imprisonment for felony,⁵ she succeeds to the relative rights which the father possessed before.

3. The guardian has a power of control over his ward, corresponding in the main to that which the father has over his child,

him, that he is bound to support her elsewhere. *Rumney v. Keyes*, 7 N. H. 570; *Allen v. Aldrich*, 9 Fost. 63; *Shaw v. Thompson*, 16 Pick. 198; *Clement v. Mattison*, 3 Rich. 93. In such a case his liability to supply her with necessaries cannot be restricted by giving notice to particular persons not to trust her. *Bolton v. Prentice*, 2 Strange, 1214; *Harris v. Morris*, 4 Esp. 41.

¹ *Hutcheson v. Peck*, 5 Johns. 196; *Love v. Moynahan*, 16 Ill. 277.

² *Saunders v. Rodway*, 16 Jur. 1005; 13 Eng. L. & Eq. 463.

³ *Whiting v. Earle*, 3 Pick. 201; *McCoy v. Huffman*, 8 Cow. 841; *State v. Barrett*, 45 N. H. 15; *Wolcott v. Rickey*, 22 Iowa, 171; *Fairhurst v. Lewis*, 23 Ark. 435; *Hardwick v. Pawlet*, 36 Vt. 320.

⁴ *Dedham v. Natick*, 16 Mass. 135. See p. 348.

⁵ *Bailey's Case*, 6 Dowl. P. C. 311. If, however, there be a guardian appointed for the child by the proper court, his right to the custody of the child is superior to that of the parent. *Macready v. Wolcott*, 33 Conn. 321.

though in some respects more restricted, while in others it is broader. The appointment of guardian when made by the courts is of local force only, being confined to the State in which it is made, and the guardian would have no authority to change the domicile of the ward to another State or country. But the appointment commonly has reference to the possession of property by the ward, and over this property the guardian is given a power of control which is not possessed by the father, as such, over the property owned by his child.¹

4. The relation of master and apprentice is founded on a contract between the two, generally with the consent of the parent or party standing *in loco parentis* to the latter, by which the * master is to teach the apprentice some specified [* 341] trade or means of living, and the apprentice, either wholly or in part in consideration of the instruction, is to perform services for the master while receiving it. This relation is also statutory and local, and the power to control the apprentice is assimilated to that of the parent by the statute law.²

5. The power of the master to impose restraints upon the action of the servant he employs, is of so limited a nature that practically it may be said to rest upon continuous voluntary assent. If the servant misconducts himself, or refuses to submit to proper control, the master may discharge him, but cannot resort to confinement or personal chastisement.

6. The relation of teacher and scholar places the former more nearly in the place of the parent than either of the two preceding relations places the master. While the pupil is under his care, he has a right to enforce obedience to his commands lawfully given in his capacity of teacher, even to the extent of bodily chastisement or confinement. And in deciding questions of discipline he acts judicially, and is not to be made liable, either civilly or criminally, unless he has acted with express malice, or been guilty of such excess in punishment that malice may fairly be implied. All presumptions favor the correctness and justice of his action.³

¹ 1 Cooley's Bl. Com. 462, and cases cited.

² The relation is one founded on personal trust and confidence, and the master cannot assign the articles of apprenticeship except by consent

of the apprentice and of his proper guardian. *Haley v. Taylor*, 3 Dana, 222; *Nickerson v. Howard*, 19 Johns. 113; *Tucker v. Magee*, 18 Ala. 99.

³ *State v. Pendergrass*, 2 Dev. & Bat. 365; *Cooper v. McJunkin*, 4

7. Where parties bail another, in legal proceedings, they are regarded in law as his jailers, selected by himself, and with the right to his legal custody for the purpose of seizing and delivering him up to the officers of the law at any time before the liability of the bail has become fixed by a forfeiture being judicially declared on his failure to comply with the condition of the bond.¹ This is a right which the bail may exercise in person or by agent, and without resort to judicial process.²

8. The control of the creditor over the person of his debtor, through the process which the law gives for the enforcement of his demand, is now very nearly abolished, thanks to the humane provisions which have been made of late by statute or by constitution. In cases of torts and where debts were fraudulently contracted, or where there is an attempt at a fraudulent disposition of property with intent to delay the creditor, or to deprive him of payment, the body of the debtor is allowed to be seized and confined; but the reader must be referred to the constitution and statutes of his State for specific information on this subject.

[* 342] * These, then, are the legal restraints upon personal liberty. For any other restraint, or for any abuse of the legal rights which have been specified, the party restrained is entitled to immediate process from the courts, and to speedy relief.

The right to personal liberty did not depend in England on any statute, but it was the birthright of every freeman. As slavery ceased it became universal, and the judges were bound to protect it by proper writ when infringed. But in those times when the power of Parliament was undefined and in dispute, and the judges held their offices only during the king's pleasure, it was almost a matter of course that rights should be violated, and that legal redress should be impracticable, however clear those rights

Ind. 290; *Commonwealth v. Randall*, 4 Gray, 38; *Anderson v. State*, 3 Head, 455; *Lander v. Seaver*, 32 Vt. 114; *Morrow v. Wood*, 35 Wis. 59.

¹ *Harp v. Osgood*, 2 Hill, 216; *Commonwealth v. Brickett*, 8 Pick. 138. The principal may be followed, if necessary, out of the jurisdiction of the court in which the bail was taken,

and arrested there. *Parker v. Bidwell*, 3 Conn. 84. Even though it be out of the State. *Harp v. Osgood*, *supra*. And doors, if necessary, may be broken in order to make the arrest. *Read's Case*, 4 Conn. 166; *Nicolls v. Ingersoll*, 7 Johns. 145.

² *Parker v. Bidwell*, 3 Conn. 84; *Nicolls v. Ingersoll*, 7 Johns. 145.

might be. But in many cases it was not very clear what the legal rights of parties were. The courts which proceeded according to the course of the common law, as well as the courts of chancery, had limits to their authority which could be understood, and a definite course of proceeding was marked out for them by statute or by custom; and if they exceeded their jurisdiction and invaded the just liberty of the subject, the illegality of the process would generally appear in the proceedings. But there were two tribunals unknown to the common law, but exercising a most fearful authority, against whose abuses it was not easy for the most upright and conscientious judge in all cases to afford relief. These were, 1. The Court of Star Chamber, which became fully recognized and established in the time of Henry VII., though originating long before. Its jurisdiction extended to all sorts of offences, contempts of authority and disorders, the punishment of which was not supposed to be adequately provided for by the common law; such as slanders of persons in authority, the propagation of seditious news, refusal to lend money to the king, disregard of executive proclamations, &c. It imposed fines without limit, and inflicted any punishment in the discretion of its judges short of death. Even jurors were punished in this court for verdicts in State trials not satisfactory to the authorities. Although the king's chancellor and judges were entitled to seats in this court, the actual exercise of its powers appears to have fallen into the hands of the king's privy council, which sat as a species of inquisition, and exercised almost any authority it saw fit to assume.¹ The court was abolished by the Long Parliament in 1641. 2. The Court of High Commission, established * in the time of Elizabeth, and which exercised a [* 343] power in ecclesiastical matters corresponding to that which the Star Chamber assumed in other cases, and in an equally absolute and arbitrary manner. This court was also abolished in 1641, but was afterwards revived for a short time in the reign of James II.

It is evident that while these tribunals existed there could be

¹ See Hallam, Constitutional History, c. 1 and 8; Todd, Parliamentary Government in England, Vol. II. c. 1. The rise and extension of authority of this court, and its arbitrary

character, are very fully set forth in Brodie's Constitutional History of the British Empire, to which the reader is referred for more particular information.

no effectual security to liberty. A brief reference to the remarkable struggle which took place during the reign of Charles I. will perhaps the better enable us to understand the importance of those common-law protections to personal liberty to which we shall have occasion to refer, and also of those statutory securities which have since been added.

When the king attempted to rule without the Parliament, and in 1625 dissolved that body, and resorted to forced loans, the grant of monopolies, and the levy of ship moneys, as the means of replenishing a treasury that could only lawfully be supplied by taxes granted by the commons, the privy council was his convenient means of enforcing compliance with his will. Those who refused to contribute to the loans demanded were committed to prison. When they petitioned the Court of the King's Bench for their discharge, the warden of the fleet made return to the writ of *habeas corpus*, that they were detained by warrant of the privy council, informing him of no particular cause of imprisonment, but that they were committed by the special command of his majesty. Such a return presented for the decision of the court the question, "Is such a warrant, which does not specify the cause of detention, valid by the laws of England?" The court held that it was, justifying their decision upon supposed precedents, although, as Mr. Hallam says, "it was evidently the consequence of this decision that every statute from the time of Magna Charta, designed to protect the personal liberties of Englishmen, became a dead letter, since the insertion of four words in a warrant (*per speciale mandatum regis*), which might become matter of form, would control their remedial efficacy. And this wound was the more deadly in that the notorious cause of these gentlemen's imprisonment was their withstanding an illegal exaction of money. Every thing that distinguished our constitutional laws, all that rendered the name of England valuable, was at stake in this issue."¹ This decision, among other violent acts, led to the Petition of Right, one of the principal charters of English liberty, but which was not assented [* 344] to by the king until the judges had *intimated that if he saw fit to violate it by arbitrary commitments, they would take care that it should not be enforced by their aid against his

¹ Hallam, Const. Hist. c. 7. See also Brodie, Const. Hist. Vol. II. c. 1.

will. And four years later, when the king committed members of Parliament for words spoken in debate, offensive to the royal prerogative, the judges evaded the performance of their duty on *habeas corpus*, and the members were only discharged when the king gave his consent to that course.¹

The Habeas Corpus Act was passed in 1679, mainly to prevent such abuses and other evasions of duty by judges and ministerial officers, and to compel prompt action in any case in which illegal imprisonment was alleged. That act gave no new right to the subject, but it furnished the means of enforcing those which existed before.² The preamble recited that "whereas great delays have been used by sheriffs, jailers, and other officers, to whose custody any of the king's subjects have been committed for criminal or supposed criminal matters, in making returns of writs of *habeas corpus*, to them directed, by standing out on *alias* or *pluries habeas corpus*, and sometimes more, and by other shifts, to avoid their yielding obedience to such writs, contrary to their duty and the known laws of the land, whereby many of the king's subjects have been and hereafter may be long detained in prison in such cases, where by law they are bailable, to their great charge and vexation. For the prevention whereof, and the more speedy relief of all persons imprisoned for any such criminal or supposed criminal matters," the act proceeded to make elaborate and careful provisions for the future. The important provisions of the act may be summed up as follows: That the writ of *habeas corpus* might be issued by any court of record or judge thereof, either in term-time or vacation, on the application of any person confined, or of any person for him; the application to be in writing and on oath, and with a copy of the warrant of commitment attached, if procurable; the writ to be returnable either in court or at chambers; the person detaining the applicant to make return to the writ by bringing up the prisoner with the cause of his detention, and the court or judge to discharge him unless the imprisonment appeared to be legal, and in that case to take bail if the case was bailable; and performance of all these duties was made compulsory, under heavy penalties. * Thus the duty [* 345] which the judge or other officer might evade with impu-

¹ Hallam, Const. Hist. c. 8; Brodie, Const. Hist. Vol. I. c. 8.

Beeching's Case, 4 B. & C. 136; Matter of Jackson, 15 Mich. 436.

² Hallam, Const. Hist. c. 13;

nity before, he must now perform or suffer punishment. The act also provided for punishing severely a second commitment for the same cause, after a party had once been discharged on *habeas corpus*, and also made the sending of inhabitants of England, Wales, and Berwick-upon-Tweed abroad for imprisonment illegal, and subject to penalty. Important as this act was¹ it was less broad in its scope than the remedy had been before, being confined to cases of imprisonment for criminal or supposed criminal matters;² but the attempt in Parliament nearly a century later to extend its provisions to other cases was defeated by the opposition of Lord *Mansfield*, on the express ground that it was unnecessary, inasmuch as the common-law remedy was sufficient;³ as perhaps it might have been, had officers been always disposed to perform their duty. Another attempt in 1816 was successful.⁴

The Habeas Corpus Act was not made, in express terms, to extend to the American colonies, but it was in some expressly, and in others by silent acquiescence, adopted and acted upon, and all the subsequent legislation in the American States has been based upon it, and has consisted in little more than a re-enactment of its essential provisions.

What Courts issue the Writ.

The protection of personal liberty is for the most part confided to the State authorities, and to the State courts the party must apply for relief on *habeas corpus* when illegally restrained. There are only a few cases in which the federal courts can interfere; and those are cases in which either the illegal imprisonment is under pretence of national authority, or in which this process becomes important or convenient in order to enforce or vindicate some right, or authority under the Constitution or laws of the United States.

The Judiciary Act of 1789 provided that each of the several

¹ Mr. Hurd, in the appendix to his excellent treatise on the Writ of Habeas Corpus, gives a complete copy of the act. See also appendix to Lieber, *Civil Liberty and Self-Government*; Broom *Const. Law*, 218.

² See *Mayor of London's Case*,

3 Wils. 198; *Wilson's Case*, 7 Q. B. 984.

³ *Life of Mansfield* by Lord Campbell, 2 *Lives of Chief Justices*, c. 35; 15 *Hansard's Debates*, 897 *et seq.*

⁴ By Stat. 56 Geo. III. c. 100. See Broom, *Const. Law*, 224.

federal courts should have power to issue writs of *scire facias*, *habeas corpus*, and all other writs not specially provided for by statute, which might be necessary for the exercise of their respective jurisdictions and agreeable to the principles and usages of law ; and that either of the justices of the Supreme Court, as well as the district judges, should have power to grant writs of *habeas corpus* for the purposes of an inquiry into the cause of commitment ; provided that in no case should such writs extend to * prisoners in jail, unless where they were in [* 346] custody under or by color of the authority of the United States, or were committed to trial before some court of the same, or were necessary to be brought into court to testify.¹ Under this statute no court of the United States or judge thereof could issue a *habeas corpus* to bring up a prisoner in custody under a sentence or execution of a State court, for any other purpose than to be used as a witness. And this was so whether the imprisonment was under civil or criminal process.²

During what were known as the nullification troubles in South Carolina, the defect of federal jurisdiction in respect to this writ became apparent, and another act was passed, having for its object, among other things, the protection of persons who might be prosecuted under assumed State authority for acts done under the laws of the United States. This act provided that either of the justices of the Supreme Court, or a judge of any District Court of the United States, in addition to the authority already conferred by law, should have power to grant writs of *habeas corpus* in all cases of a prisoner or prisoners in jail or confinement, where he or they shall be committed or confined on or by any authority of law, for any act done or omitted to be done, in pursuance of a law of the United States, or any order, process, or decree of any judge or court thereof.³

In 1842 further legislation seemed to have become a necessity, in order to give to the federal judiciary jurisdiction upon this writ of cases in which questions of international law were involved,

¹ 1 Statutes at Large, 81.

² *Ex parte Dorr*, 3 How. 103.

³ 4 Stat. at Large, 634. See *Ex parte Robinson*, 6 McLean, 355; s. c. 1 Bond, 39; *United States v. Jailer of Fayette Co.*, 2 Abb. U. S. 265. Robinson was United States marshal,

and was imprisoned under a warrant issued by a State court for executing process under the Fugitive Slave Law, and was discharged by a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States under this act.

and which, consequently, could only properly be disposed of by the jurisdiction to which international concerns were by the Constitution committed. The immediate occasion for this legislation was the arrest of a subject of Great Britain by the authorities of the State of New York, for an act which his government avowed and took the responsibility of, and which was the subject of diplomatic correspondence between the two nations. An act of Congress was consequently passed, which provides that either of the justices of the Supreme Court, or any judge of any District Court of the United States in which a prisoner is confined, in addition to the authority previously conferred by law, shall have power to grant writs of *habeas corpus* in all cases of any prisoner or prisoners in jail or confinement, where he, she, or they, being subjects or citizens of a foreign State, and domiciled therein, shall be committed, or confined, or in custody, under or by any authority, or law, or process founded thereon, of the United States or of any one of them, for or on account of any act done or omitted under any alleged right, title, authority, privilege, protection, or exemption, set up or claimed under the commission, or order, or sanction of any foreign State or sovereignty, the validity or effect whereof depends upon the law of nations, or under color thereof.¹

In 1867 a further act was passed, which provided that the several courts of the United States, and the several justices and judges of such courts, within their respective jurisdictions, in addition to the authority already conferred by law, shall have power to grant writs of *habeas corpus* in all cases where any person may be restrained of his or her liberty in violation of the Constitution, or of any treaty or law of the United States.²

These are the cases in which the national courts and judges have jurisdiction of this writ: in other cases the party must seek his remedy in the proper State tribunal.³ And al-
[* 347] though the State courts formerly * claimed and exercised the right to inquire into the lawfulness of restraint under

¹ 5 Stat. at Large, 539. McLeod's Case, which was the immediate occasion of the passage of this act, will be found reported in 25 Wend. 482. It was reviewed by Judge Talmadge in 26 Wend. 663, and a reply to the review appears in 3 Hill, 635.

² 14 Stat. at Large, 385.

³ *Ex parte* Dorr, 3 How. 103; *Barry v Mercein*, 5 How. 103; *Dekraft v. Barney*, 2 Black, 704. See *United States v. French*, 1 Gall. 1; *Ex parte* Barry, 2 How. 65.

the national authority,¹ it is now settled by the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States, that the question of the legality of the detention in such cases is one for the determination, exclusively, of the federal judiciary, so that although a State court or judge may issue this process in any case where illegal restraint upon liberty is alleged, yet when it is served upon any officer or person who detains another in custody under the national authority, it is his duty, by proper return, to make known to the State court or judge the authority by which he holds such person, but not further to obey the process ; and that as the State judiciary have no authority within the limits of the sovereignty assigned by the Constitution to the United States, the State court or judge can proceed no further with the case.²

The State constitutions recognize the writ of *habeas corpus* as an existing remedy in the cases to which it is properly applicable, and designate the courts or officers which may issue it ; but they do not point out the cases in which it may be employed. Upon this subject the common law and the statutes must be our guide ; and although the statutes will be found to make specific provision for particular cases, it is believed that in no instance which has fallen under our observation has there been any intention to restrict the remedy, and make it less broad and effectual than it was at the common law.³

¹ See the cases collected in Hurd on Habeas Corpus, B. 2, c. 1, § 5, and in Abb. Nat. Dig. 609, note.

² *Ableman v. Booth*, 21 How. 506. See *Norris v. Newton*, 5 McLean, 92 ; *United States v. Rector*, 5 McLean, 174 ; *Spangler's Case*, 11 Mich. 298 ; *In re Hopson*, 40 Barb. 34 ; *Ex parte Hill*, 5 Nev. 154 ; *Ex parte Bur*, 49 Cal. 159. Notwithstanding the decision of *Ableman v. Booth*, the State courts have frequently since assumed to pass definitely upon cases of alleged illegal restraint under federal authority, and this, too, by the acquiescence of the federal officers. As the remedy in the State courts is generally more expeditious and easy than can be afforded in the national tribunals, it is possible that the federal authorities may still continue to

acquiesce in such action of the State courts, in cases where there can be no reason to fear that they will take different views of the questions involved from those likely to be held by the federal courts. Nevertheless, while the case of *Ableman v. Booth* stands unreversed, the law must be held to be as there declared. It has recently been approved in *Tarble's Case*, 13 Wall. 397, Chief Justice Chase dissenting.

³ See *Matter of Jackson*, 15 Mich. 417, where this whole subject is fully considered. The application for the writ is not necessarily made by the party in person, but may be made by any other person on his behalf, if a sufficient reason is stated for its not being made by him personally. The *Hottentot Venus Case*, 13 East, 195 ;

We have elsewhere referred to certain rules regarding the validity of judicial proceedings.¹ In the great anxiety on the part of our legislators to make the most ample provision for speedy relief from unlawful confinement, authority to issue the writ of *habeas corpus* has been conferred upon inferior judicial officers, who make use of it sometimes as if it were a writ of error, under which they might correct the errors and irregularities of other judges and courts, whatever their relative jurisdiction and dignity. Any such employment of the writ is an abuse.²

[* 348] Where a *party who is in confinement, under judicial process is brought up on *habeas corpus*, the court or judge before whom he is returned will inquire: 1. Whether the court or officer issuing the process under which he is detained had jurisdiction of the case, and has acted within that jurisdiction in issuing such process.³ If so, mere irregularities or errors of

Child's Case, 29 Eng. L. & Eq. 259. A wife may have the writ to release her husband from unlawful imprisonment, and may herself be heard on the application. Cobbett's Case, 15 Q. B. 181, note; Cobbett v. Hudson, 10 Eng. L. & Eq. 318; s. c. 15 Q. B. 988. Lord Campbell in this case cites the case of the wife of John Bunyan, who was heard on his behalf when in prison.

¹ See *post*, p. *397 *et seq.*

² People v. Liscomb, 60 N. Y. 559, 574; Petition of Crandall, 34 Wis. 177; *Ex parte* Van Hagan, 25 Ohio, n. s. 426; *Ex parte* Shaw, 7 Ohio, n. s. 81; *Ex parte* Parks, 93 U. S. Rep. 18, 23; Perry v. State, 41 Tex. 488; Matter of Underwood, 30 Mich. 502; Matter of Eaton, 27 Mich. 1; *Re* Stupp, 12 Blatch. 501; *Ex parte* Winslow, 9 Nev. 71; *Ex parte* Hartman, 44 Cal. 32; *In re* Falvey, 7 Wis. 630. Petition of Semler, 41 Wis. 517; *In re* Stokes, 5 Sup. Ct. (N. Y.) 71; *Ex parte* Fernandez, 10 C. B. n. s. 2, 37. This is so, even though there be no appellate tribunal in which the judgment may be reviewed in the ordinary way. *Ex parte* Plante, 6 Lower Can. Rep. 106. It is worthy of seri-

ous consideration whether, in those States where the whole judicial power is by the constitution vested in certain specified courts, it is competent by law to give to judicial officers not holding such courts authority to review, even indirectly, the decisions of the courts, and to discharge persons committed under their judgments. Such officers could exercise only a special statutory authority. Yet its exercise in such cases is not only judicial, but it is in the nature of appellate judicial power. The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of the United States to issue the writ in cases of confinement under the order of the District Courts, was sustained in *Ex parte* Bollman and Swartwout, 4 Cranch, 75, and Matter of Metzger, 5 How. 190, on the ground that it was appellate. See also *Ex parte* Kearney, 7 Wheat. 38; *Ex parte* Watkins, 7 Pet. 588; *Ex parte* Milburn, 9 Pet. 704; Matter of Kaine, 14 How. 103; Matter of Eaton, 27 Mich. 1; Matter of Buddington, 29 Mich. 472.

³ The validity of the appointment or election of an officer *de facto* cannot be inquired into on *habeas corpus*.

judgment in the exercise of that jurisdiction must be disregarded on this writ, and must be corrected either by the court issuing the process, or on regular appellate proceedings.¹ 2. If the process is not void for want of jurisdiction, the further inquiry will be made, whether, by law, the case is bailable, and if so, bail will be taken if the party offers it; otherwise he will be remanded to the proper custody.²

This writ is also sometimes employed to enable a party to enforce a right of control which by law he may have, springing from some one of the domestic relations; especially to enable a parent to obtain the custody and control of his child, where it is detained from him by some other person. The courts, however, do not generally go farther in these cases than to determine what is for the best interest of the child; and they do not feel compelled to remand him to any custody where it appears not to be for the child's interest. The theory of the writ is, that it relieves from improper restraint; and if the child is of an age to render it proper to consult his feelings and wishes, this may be done in any case;³ and

Ex parte Strahl, 16 Iowa, 369; Russell v. Whiting, 1 Wins. (N. C.) 463. Otherwise if a mere usurper issues process for the imprisonment of a citizen. *Ex parte* Strahl, *supra*.

¹ People v. Cassels, 5 Hill, 164; Bushnell's Case, 9 Ohio, n. s. 183; *Ex parte* Watkins, 7 Pet. 568; Matter of Metzger, 5 How. 191; Petition of Smith, 2 Nev. 338; *Ex parte* Gibson, 31 Cal. 619; Hammond v. People, 32 Ill. 472, per Breese, J. In State v. Shattuck, 45 N. H. 211, Bellows, J., states the rule very correctly, as follows: "If the court had jurisdiction of the matter embraced in these causes, this court will not, on *habeas corpus*, revise the judgment. State v. Towle, 42 N. H. 541; Ross's Case, 2 Pick. 166, and Riley's Case, 2 Pick. 171; Adams v. Vose, 1 Gray, 51. If in such case the proceedings are irregular or erroneous, the judgment is voidable and not void, and stands good until revised or annulled in a proper proceeding instituted for that purpose; but when it appears that the magistrate had no

jurisdiction, the proceedings are void, and the respondent may be discharged on *habeas corpus*. State v. Towle, before cited; Kellogg, *Ex parte*, 6 Vt. 509. See also State v. Richmond, 6 N. H. 232; Burnham v. Stevens, 33 N. H. 247; Hurst v. Smith, 1 Gray, 49."

² It is not a matter of course that the party is to be discharged even where the authority under which he is held is adjudged illegal. For it may appear that he should be lawfully confined in different custody; in which case, the proper order may be made for the transfer. Matter of Mason, 8 Mich. 70; Matter of Ring, 28 Cal. 247; *Ex parte* Gibson, 31 Cal. 619. And where he is detained for trial on an imperfect charge of crime, the court, if possessing power to commit *de novo*, instead of discharging him, should proceed to inquire whether there is probable cause for holding him for trial, and if so, should order accordingly. Hurd on Habeas Corpus, 416.

³ Commonwealth v. Aves, 18 Pick.

it is especially proper in many cases where the parents are living in separation and both desire his custody. The right of the father, in these cases, is generally recognized as best; but this must depend very much upon circumstances, and the tender age of the child may often be a controlling consideration against his claim. The courts have large discretionary power in these cases, and the tendency of modern decisions has been to extend, rather than restrict it.¹

There is no common-law right to a trial by jury of the issues of fact joined on *habeas corpus*; but the issues both of fact and of law are tried by the court or judge before whom the proceeding is had;² though without doubt a jury trial might be provided for by statute, and perhaps even ordered by the court in some cases.³

[* 349] * *Right of Discussion and Petition.*

The right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances, is one which "would seem unnecessary to be expressly provided for in a republican government, since it results from the very nature and structure of its institutions. It is impossible that it could be practically denied until the spirit of liberty had wholly disappeared, and the people had become so servile and debased as to be unfit to exercise any of the privileges of freemen."⁴ But it has not been thought unimportant to protect this right by statutory enactments in England; and indeed it will be remembered that one of the most notable attempts to crush the liberties of the kingdom made

193; *Shaw v. Nachwes*, 43 Iowa, 653; *Garner v. Gordan*, 41 Ind. 92; *People v. Weissenbach*, 60 N. Y. 385.

¹ *Barry's Case* may almost be said to exhaust all the law on this subject. We refer to the various judicial decisions made in it, so far as they are reported in the regular reports. 8 Paige, 47; 25 Wend. 64; *People v. Mercein*, 3 Hill, 399; 2 How. 65; *Barry v. Mercein*, 5 How. 105. See also the recent case of *Adams v. Adams*, 1 Duv. 167. For the former rule, see *The King v. De Manneville*, 5 East, 221; *Ex parte Skinner*, 9 J. B.

Moore, 278. Where the court is satisfied that the interest of the child would be subserved by refusing the custody to either of the parents, it may be confided to a third party. *Chetwynd v. Chetwynd*, L. R. 1 P. & D. 39; *In re Goodenough*, 19 Wis. 274.

² See *Hurd on Habeas Corpus*, 297-302, and cases cited; *Baker v. Gordon*, 23 Ind. 209.

³ See *Matter of Hakewell*, 22 Eng. L. & Eq. 395; s. c. 12 C. B. 223.

⁴ *Story on the Constitution*, § 1894.

the right of petition the point of attack, and selected for its contemplated victims the chief officers in the Episcopal hierarchy. The trial and acquittal of the seven bishops in the reign of James II. constituted one of the decisive battles in English constitutional history ;¹ and the right which was then vindicated is “a sacred right which in difficult times shows itself in its full magnitude, frequently serves as a safety-valve if judiciously treated by the recipients, and may give to the representatives or other bodies the most valuable information. It may right many a wrong, and the deprivation of it would at once be felt by every freeman as a degradation. The right of petitioning is indeed a necessary consequence of the right of free speech and deliberation,—a simple, primitive, and natural right. As a privilege it is not even denied the creature in addressing the Deity.”² Happily the occasions for discussing and defending it have not been numerous in this country, and have been confined to an exciting subject now disposed of.³

* *Right to bear Arms.*

[* 350]

Among the other safeguards to liberty should be mentioned the right of the people to keep and bear arms.⁴ A standing army is peculiarly obnoxious in any free government, and the jealousy of such an army has at times been so strongly manifested in England as to lead to the belief that even though recruited from among themselves, it was more dreaded by the people as an instrument of oppression than a tyrannical monarch or any foreign power. So impatient did the English people become of the very

¹ See this case in 12 Howell's State Trials, 183 ; 3 Mod. 212. Also in Broom, Const. Law, 408. See also the valuable note appended by Mr. Broom, p. 493, in which the historical events bearing on the right of petition are noted. Also, May, Const. Hist. c. 7 ; 1 Bl. Com. 143.

² Lieber, Civil Liberty and Self-Government, c. 12.

³ For the discussions on the right of petition in Congress, particularly with reference to slavery, see 1 Benton's Abridgment of Debates, 397 ; 2 Benton's Abridgment of Debates,

57-60, 182-188, 209, 436-444 ; 12 Benton's Abridgment of Debates, 660-679, 705-743 ; 13 Benton's Abridgment of Debates, 5-28, 266-290, 557-562. Also Benton's Thirty Years' View, Vol. I. c. 135, Vol. II. c. 32, 33, 36, 37. Also the current political histories and biographies. The right to petition Congress is one of the attributes of national citizenship, and as such is under the protection of the national authority. United States v. Cruikshank, 92 U. S. Rep. 542, 552, per Waite, Ch. J.

⁴ 1 Bl. Com. 143.

army that liberated them from the tyranny of James II. that they demanded its reduction even before the liberation became complete ; and to this day the British Parliament render a standing army practically impossible by only passing a mutiny act from session to session. The alternative to a standing army is "a well-regulated militia ;" but this cannot exist unless the people are trained to bearing arms. The federal and State constitutions therefore provide that the right of the people to bear arms shall not be infringed ; but how far it may be in the power of the legislature to regulate the right we shall not undertake to say. Happily there neither has been, nor, we may hope, is likely to be, much occasion for an examination of that question by the courts.¹

¹ In *Bliss v. Commonwealth*, 2 Lit. 90, the statute "to prevent persons wearing concealed arms" was held unconstitutional, as infringing on the right of the people to bear arms in defence of themselves and of the State. But see *Nunn v. State*, 1 Kelly, 243; *State v. Mitchell*, 3 Blackf. 229; *Aynette v. State*, 2 Humph. 154; *State v. Buzzard*, 4 Ark. 18; *Carroll v. State*, 28 Ark. 99; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 538; *State v. Jumel*, 13 La. Ann. 899; s. c. 1 Green, Cr. Rep. 481; *Owen v. State*, 31 Ala. 387; *Cockrum v. State*, 24 Tex. 394; *Andrews v. State*, 3 Heisk. 165; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 8; *State v. Reid*, 1 Ala. 612. A statute prohibiting the open wearing of arms upon the person was held unconstitu-

tional in *Stockdale v. State*, 32 Geo. 225. And one forbidding carrying, either publicly or privately, a dirk, sword-cane, Spanish stiletto, belt or pocket pistol, or revolver, was sustained, except as to the last mentioned weapon; and as to that it was held that, if the weapon was suitable for the equipment of a soldier, the right of carrying it could not be taken away. As bearing also upon the right of self-defence, see *Ely v. Thompson*, 8 A. K. Marsh. 73, where it was held that the statute subjecting free persons of color to corporal punishment for "lifting their hands in opposition" to a white person was unconstitutional. And see, in general, Bishop on Stat. Crimes, c. 36, and cases cited.

* CHAPTER XI.

[* 351]

OF THE PROTECTION TO PROPERTY BY "THE LAW OF THE LAND."

THE protection of the subject in the free enjoyment of his life, his liberty, and his property, except as they might be declared by the judgment of his peers or the law of the land to be forfeited, was guaranteed by the twenty-ninth chapter of Magna Charta, "which alone," says Sir William Blackstone, "would have merited the title that it bears of the *Great Charter*."¹ The people of the American States, holding the sovereignty in their own hands, have no occasion to exact pledges from any one for a due observance of individual rights; but the aggressive tendency of power is such, that they have deemed it of no small importance, that, in framing the instruments under which their governments are to be administered by their agents, they should repeat and re-enact

¹ 4 Bl. Com. 424. The chapter, as it stood in the original charter of John, was: "Ne corpus liberi hominis capiatur nec imprisonetur nec disseisietur nec utlagetur nec exuletur, nec aliquo modo destruat, nec rex eat vel mittat super eum vi, nisi per iudicium parium suorum, vel per legem terræ." No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned or disseised or outlawed or banished, or any ways destroyed, nor will the king pass upon him, or commit him to prison, unless by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land. In the charter of Henry III. it was varied slightly, as follows: "Nullus liber homo capiatur vel imprisonetur, aut disseisietur de libero tenemento suo vel libertatibus vel liberis consuetudinibus suis, aut utlagetur aut exuletur, aut aliquo modo destruat, nec super eum ibimus, nec

super eum mittemus, nisi per legale iudicium parium suorum, vel per legem terræ." See Blackstone's Charters. The Petition of Right — 1 Car. I. c. 1 — prayed, among other things, "that no man be compelled to make or yield any gift, loan, benevolence, tax, or such like charge, without common consent, by act of Parliament; that none be called upon to make answer for refusal so to do; that freemen be imprisoned or detained only by the law of the land, or by due process of law, and not by the king's special command, without any charge." The Bill of Rights — 1 Wm. and Mary, § 2, c. 2 — was confined to an enumeration and condemnation of the illegal acts of the preceding reign; but the Great Charter of Henry III. was then, and is still, in force.

this guaranty, and thereby adopt it as a principle of constitutional protection. In some form of words, it is to be found in each of the State constitutions;¹ and, though verbal differ-

¹ The following are the constitutional provisions in the several States:—

Alabama: "That, in all criminal prosecutions, the accused . . . shall not be compelled to give evidence against himself, or be deprived of his life, liberty, or property, but by due course of law." Art. 1, § 7. — *Arkansas*: "That no person shall . . . be deprived of his life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Art. 1, § 9. — *California*: Similar to that of Alabama. Art. 1, § 8. — *Connecticut*: Same as Alabama. Art. 1, § 9. — *Delaware*: Like that of Alabama, substituting for "course of law," "the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land." Art. 1, § 7. — *Florida*: Similar to that of Alabama. Art. 1, § 9. — *Georgia*: "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, except by due process of law." Art. 1, § 8. — *Illinois*: "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Art. 1, § 2. — *Colorado*: The same. Art. 1, § 25. — *Iowa*: The same. Art. 1, § 9. — *Kentucky*: "Nor can he be deprived of his life, liberty, or property, unless by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land." Art. 13, § 12. — *Maine*: "Nor be deprived of his life, liberty, property, or privileges, but by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land." Art. 1, § 6. — *Maryland*: "That no man ought to be taken or imprisoned, or disseised of his freehold, liberties, or privileges, or outlawed, or exiled, or in any manner destroyed, or deprived of his life, liberty, or property, but by the judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land." Declaration of Rights, § 23. — *Massachusetts*: "No subject

shall be arrested, imprisoned, despoiled, or deprived of his property, immunities, or privileges, put out of the protection of the law, exiled, or deprived of his life, liberty, or estate, but by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land." Declaration of Rights, Art. 12. — *Michigan*: "No person shall . . . be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Art. 6, § 32. — *Minnesota*: Like that of Michigan. Art. 1, § 7. — *Mississippi*: The same. Art. 1, § 2. — *Missouri*: Same as Delaware. Art. 1, § 18. — *Nevada*: "Nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Art. 1, § 8. — *New Hampshire*: Same as Massachusetts. Bill of Rights, Art. 15. — *New York*: Same as Nevada. Art. 1, § 6. — *North Carolina*: "That no person ought to be taken, imprisoned, or disseised of his freehold, liberties, or privileges, or outlawed or exiled, or in any manner destroyed, or deprived of his life, liberty, or property, but by the law of the land." Declaration of Rights, § 17. — *Pennsylvania*: Like Delaware. Art. 1, § 9. — *Rhode Island*: Like Delaware. Art. 1, § 10. — *South Carolina*: Like that of Massachusetts, substituting "person" for "subject." Art. 1, § 14. — *Tennessee*: "That no man shall be taken or imprisoned, or disseised of his freehold, liberties, or privileges, or outlawed or exiled, or in any manner destroyed, or deprived of his life, liberty, or property, but by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land." Art. 1, § 8. — *Texas*: "No citizen of this State shall be deprived of life, liberty, property, or privileges, outlawed, exiled, or in any manner disfranchised, except by due course of

ences * appear in the different provisions, no change in [* 352] language, it is thought, has in any case been made with a view to essential * change in legal effect; and the differ- [* 353] ences in phraseology will not, therefore, be of importance in our discussion. Indeed, the language employed is generally nearly identical, except that the phrase "due process [or course] of law" is sometimes used, sometimes "the law of the land," and in some cases both; but the meaning is the same in every case.¹ And, by the fourteenth amendment, the guaranty is now incorporated in the Constitution of the United States.²

If now we shall ascertain the sense in which the phrases "due process of law" and "the law of the land" are employed in the several constitutional provisions which we have referred to, when the protection of rights in property is had in view, we shall be able, perhaps, to indicate the rule, by which the proper conclusion may be reached in those cases in which legislative action is objected to, as not being "the law of the land;" or judicial or ministerial action is contested as not being "due process of law," within the meaning of these terms as the Constitution employs them.

If we examine such definitions of these terms as are met with in the reported cases, we shall find them so various, that some difficulty must arise in fixing upon one which shall be accurate, complete in itself, and at the same time appropriate in all the cases. The diversity of definition is certainly not surprising, when we consider the diversity of cases for the purposes of which it has been attempted, and reflect that a definition that is sufficient for one case and applicable to its facts may be altogether insufficient or entirely inapplicable in another.

the law of the land." Art. 1, § 16. *West Virginia*: "No person, in time of peace, shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Art. 2, § 6. Under each of the remaining constitutions, equivalent protection to that which these provisions give is believed to be afforded by fundamental principles recognized and enforced by the courts.

¹ 2 Inst. 50; Bouv. Law. Dic. "Due process of Law," "Law of the

land;" *State v. imons*, 2 Speers, 767; *Vanzant v. Waddell*, 2 Yerg. 260; *Wally's Heirs v. Kennedy*, 2 Yerg. 554; *Greene v. Briggs*, 1 Curt. 311; *Murray's Lessee v. Hoboken Land Co.*, 18 How. 276, per *Curtis*, J.; *Parsons v. Russell*, 11 Mich. 129, per *Manning*, J.; *Ervine's Appeal*, 16 Penn. St. 256; *Banning v. Taylor*, 24 Penn. St. 289, 292; *State v. Staten*, 6 Cold. 244; *Huber v. Reiley*, 53 Penn. St. 112.

² See *ante*, p. *11.

Perhaps no definition is more often quoted than that given by Mr. Webster in the Dartmouth College Case: "By the law of the land is most clearly intended the general law; a law which hears before it condemns; which proceeds upon inquiry, and renders judgment only after trial. [The meaning is that every citizen shall hold his life, liberty, property, and immunities, [* 354] under the protection of the *general rules which govern society. Every thing which may pass under the form of an enactment is not therefore to be considered the law of the land." ¹

The definition here given is apt and suitable as applied to judicial proceedings, which cannot be valid unless they "proceed upon inquiry" and "render judgment only after trial." It is entirely correct, also, in assuming that a legislative enactment is not necessarily the law of the land. "The words 'by the law of the land,' as used in the Constitution, do not mean a statute passed for the purpose of working the wrong. That construction would render the restriction absolutely nugatory, and turn this part of the Constitution into mere nonsense. The people would be made to say to the two houses: 'You shall be vested with the legislative power of the State, but no one shall be disfranchised or deprived of any of the rights or privileges of a citizen, unless you pass a statute for that purpose. In other words, you shall not do the wrong unless you choose to do it.' " ² When the law of the land

¹ Dartmouth College v. Woodward, 4 Wheat. 519; Works of Webster, Vol. V. p. 487. And he proceeds: "If this were so, acts of attainder, bills of pains and penalties, acts of confiscation, acts reversing judgments, and acts directly transferring one man's estate to another, legislative judgments, decrees and forfeitures in all possible forms, would be the law of the land. Such a strange construction would render constitutional provisions of the highest importance completely inoperative and void. It would tend directly to establish the union of all powers in the legislature. There would be no general permanent law for courts to administer or men to live under. The administration of justice would be an empty form, an

idle ceremony. Judges would sit to execute legislative judgments and decrees, not to declare the law or administer the justice of the country."

² Per Bronson, J., in Taylor v. Porter, 4 Hill, 140. See also Jones v. Perry, 10 Yerg. 59; Ervine's Appeal, 16 Penn. St. 256; Arrowsmith v. Burlingim, 4 McLean, 498; Lane v. Dorman, 3 Scam. 238; Reed v. Wright, 2 Greene (Iowa), 15; Woodcock v. Bennett, 1 Cow. 740; Kinney v. Beverley, 2 H. & M. 536; Commonwealth v. Byrne, 20 Grat. 165; Rowan v. State, 30 Wis. 129; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 559. "Those terms, 'law of the land,' do not mean merely an act of the General Assembly. If they did, every restriction upon the legislative authority would be at once abrogated.

is spoken of, "undoubtedly a pre-existing rule of conduct" is intended, "not an *ex post facto* rescript or decree made for the occasion. The design" is "to exclude arbitrary power from every branch of the government; and there would be no exclusion if such rescripts or decrees were to take effect in the form of a statute."¹ There are nevertheless many cases in which the title to property may pass from one person to another, without the intervention of judicial proceedings, properly so called; and in preceding pages it has been shown that special legislative acts designed to accomplish the like end are allowable in *some [* 355] cases. The necessity for "general rules," therefore, is not such as to preclude the legislature from establishing special rules for particular cases, provided the particular cases range themselves under some general rule of legislative power; nor is there any requirement of judicial action which demands that, in every case, the parties interested shall have a hearing in court.²

For what more can the citizen suffer than to be taken, imprisoned, dis-seised of his freehold, liberties, and privileges; be outlawed, exiled, and destroyed, and be deprived of his property, his liberty, and his life, without crime? Yet all this he may suffer if an act of the assembly simply denouncing those penalties upon particular persons, or a particular class of persons, be in itself a law of the land within the sense of the Constitution; for what is in that sense the law of the land must be duly observed by all, and upheld and enforced by the courts. In reference to the infliction of punishment and divesting the rights of property, it has been repeatedly held in this State, and it is believed in every other of the Union, that there are limitations upon the legislative power, notwithstanding these words; and that the clause itself means that such legislative acts as profess in themselves directly to punish persons, or to deprive the citizen of his property, without trial before the judicial tribunals, and a decision upon the matter of right, as determined by the laws under which

it vested, according to the course, mode, and usages of the common law, as derived from our forefathers, are not effectually 'laws of the land' for those purposes." *Hoke v. Henderson*, 4 Dev. 15. In *Bank of Michigan v. Williams*, 5 Wend. 478, 486, Mr. Justice *Sutherland* says, vested rights "are protected under general principles of paramount, and, in this country, of universal authority." Mr. *Broom* says: "It is indeed an essential principle of the law of England, 'that the subject hath an undoubted property in his goods and possessions; otherwise there shall remain no more industry, no more justice, no more valor; for who will labor? who will hazard his person in the day of battle for that which is not his own?' The *Banker's Case*, by *Turnor*, 10. And therefore our customary law is not more solicitous about any thing than 'to preserve the property of the subject from the inundation of the prerogative.' *Ibid.*" *Broom's Const. Law*, p. 228.

¹ *Gibson*, Ch. J., in *Norman v. Heist*, 5 W. & S. 171, 173.

² See *Wynehamer v. People*, 13

On the other hand, we shall find that general rules may sometimes be as obnoxious as special, if they operate to deprive individual citizens of vested rights. While every man has a right to require that his own controversies shall be judged by the same rules which are applied in the controversies of his neighbors, the whole community is also entitled, at all times, to demand the protection of the ancient principles which shield private rights against arbitrary interference, even though such interference may be under a rule impartial in its operation. It is not the partial nature of the rule, so much as its arbitrary and unusual character, that condemns it as unknown to the law of the land. Mr. Justice *Edwards* has said in one case: "Due process of law undoubtedly means, in the due course of legal proceedings, according to those rules and forms which have been established for the protection of private rights."¹ And we have met in no judicial decision a statement that embodies more tersely and accurately the correct view of the principle we are considering, than the following, from an opinion by Mr. Justice *Johnson* of the Supreme Court of the United States: "As to the words from Magna Charta incorporated in the Constitution of Maryland, after volumes spoken and written with a view to their exposition, the good sense of mankind has at length settled down to this,—that they were intended to secure the individual from the arbitrary exercise of the powers of government, unrestrained by the established principles of private rights and distributive justice."²

N. Y. 432, per *Selden*, J. In *James v. Reynolds*, 2 Tex. 251, Chief Justice *Hemphill* says: "The terms 'law of the land' . . . are now, in their most usual acceptation, regarded as general public laws, binding upon all the members of the community, under all circumstances, and not partial or private laws, affecting the rights of private individuals or classes of individuals." And see *Vanzant v. Waddell*, 2 Yerg. 269, per *Peck*, J.; *Hard v. Nearing*, 44 Barb. 472. Nevertheless there are many cases, as we have shown, *ante*, pp. *97, *109, in which private laws may be passed in entire accord with the general public rules which govern the State; and we shall refer to more cases further on.

¹ *Westervelt v. Gregg*, 12 N. Y. 209. See also *State v. Staten*, 6 Cold. 233.

² *Bank of Columbia v. Okely*, 4 Wheat. 235. "What is meant by 'the law of the land'?" In this State, taking as our guide *Zylstra's Case*, 1 Bay, 384; *White v. Kendrick*, 1 Brev. 471; *State v. Coleman and Maxy*, 1 McMull. 502, there can be no hesitation in saying that these words mean the common law and the statute law existing in this State at the adoption of our constitution. Altogether they constitute a body of law prescribing the course of justice to which a free man is to be considered amenable for all time to come." Per *O'Neill*, J., in *State v. Simons*, 2 Speers, 761, 767.

* The principles, then, upon which the process is based [* 356] are to determine whether it is "due process" or not, and not any considerations of mere form. Administrative and remedial process may be changed from time to time, but only with due regard to the landmarks established for the protection of the citizen. When the government through its established agencies interferes with the title to one's property, or with his independent enjoyment of it, and its action is called in question as not in accordance with the law of the land, we are to test its validity by those principles of civil liberty and constitutional protection which have become established in our system of laws, and not generally by rules that pertain to forms of procedure merely. In judicial proceedings the law of the land requires a hearing before condemnation, and judgment before dispossession;¹ but when property is appropriated by the government to public uses, or the legislature interferes to give direction to its title through remedial statutes, different considerations from those which regard the controversies between man and man must prevail, different proceedings are required, and we have only to see whether the interference can be justified by the established rules applicable to the special case. Due process of law in each particular case means, such an exertion of the powers of government as the settled maxims of law permit and sanction, and under such safeguards for the protection of individual rights as those maxims prescribe for the class of cases to which the one in question belongs.²

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See also *State v. Doherty*, 60 Me. 509. It must not be understood from this, however, that it would not be competent to change either the common law or the statute law, so long as the principles therein embodied, and which protected private rights, were not departed from.

¹ *Vanzant v. Waddell*, 2 Yerg. 260; *Lenz v. Charlton*, 23 Wis. 478.

² See *Wynehamer v. People*, 13 N. Y. 432, per *Selden*, J. In *State v. Allen*, 2 McCord, 56, the court, in speaking of process for the collection of taxes, say: "We think that any legal process which was originally founded in necessity, has been consecrated by time, and approved and

acquiesced in by universal consent, must be considered an exception to the right of trial by jury, and is embraced in the alternative 'law of the land.'" And see *Hard v. Nearing*, 44 Barb. 472; *Sears v. Cottrell*, 5 Mich. 251; *Gibson v. Mason*, 5 Nev. 302. Taking property under the taxing power is due process of law. *High v. Shoemaker*, 22 Cal. 363. See also *Cruikshanks v. Charleston*, 1 McCord, 360; *State v. Mayhew*, 2 Gill, 487; *Harper v. Commissioners*, 23 Geo. 566. It is no violation of this principle to exclude from the State debauched women who are being imported for improper purposes. *Matter of Ah Fook*, 49 Cal. 402.

✓ [Private rights may be interfered with by either the legislative, executive, or judicial department of the government.] The executive department in every instance must show authority [* 357] of law for its action, and occasion does not often arise * for an examination of the limits which circumscribe its powers. The legislative department may in some cases constitutionally authorize interference, and in others may interpose by direct action. Elsewhere we shall consider the police power of the State, and endeavor to show how completely all the property, as well as all the people within the State, are subject to control under it, within certain limits, and for the purposes for which that power is exercised. The right of eminent domain and the right of taxation will also be discussed separately, and it will appear that under each the law of the land sanctions divesting individuals of their property against their will, and by somewhat summary proceedings. In every government there is inherent authority to appropriate the property of the citizen for the necessities of the State, and constitutional provisions do not confer the power, though they generally surround it with safeguards to prevent abuse. The restraints are, that when specific property is taken, a pecuniary compensation, agreed upon or determined by judicial inquiry, must be paid ; and in other cases property can only be taken for the support of the government, and each citizen can only be required to contribute his proportion to that end. But there is no rule or principle known to our system under which private property can be taken from one person and transferred to another, for the private use and benefit of such other person, whether by general law or by special enactment. The purpose must be public, and must have reference to the needs or convenience of the public. No reason of general public policy will be sufficient, it seems, to validate such transfers when they operate upon existing vested rights.¹]

¹ Taylor v. Porter, 4 Hill, 140; Osborn v. Hart, 24 Wis. 89, 91; s. c. 1 Am. Rep. 161. In Matter of Albany Street, 11 Wend. 149, it is intimated that the clause in the Constitution of New York, withholding private property from public use except upon compensation made, of itself implies that it is not to be taken in invitum

for individual use. And see Matter of John and Cherry Streets, 19 Wend. 676. A different opinion seems to have been held by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, when they decided in Harvey v. Thomas, 10 Watts, 63, that the legislature might authorize the laying out of private ways over the lands of unwilling parties, to con-

Nevertheless, in many cases and many ways remedial legislation may affect the control and disposition of property, and in some cases may change the nature of rights, give remedies where none existed before, and even divest legal titles in favor of substantial equities where the legal and equitable rights do not chance to concur in the same persons.

[The chief restriction upon this class of legislation is, that vested rights must not be disturbed; *] but in its [* 358] application as a shield of protection, the term "vested rights" is not used in any narrow or technical sense, or as importing a power of legal control merely, but rather as implying a vested interest which it is right and equitable that the government should recognize and protect, and of which the individual could not be deprived arbitrarily without injustice. [The right to private property is a sacred right; not, as has been justly said, "introduced as the result of princes' edicts, concessions, and charters, but it was the old fundamental law, springing from the original frame and constitution of the realm." ¹

[But] as it is a right which rests upon equities, it has its reasonable limits and restrictions; it must have some regard to the general welfare and public policy; it cannot be a right which is to be examined, settled, and defended on a distinct and separate consideration of the individual case, but rather on broad and general grounds, which embrace the welfare of the whole community, and which seek the equal and impartial protection of the interests of all.²

And it may be well at this point to examine in the light of the reported cases the question, What is a vested right in the constitutional sense? and when we have solved that question, we may be the better able to judge under what circumstances one may be justified in resisting a change in the general laws of the State

nect the coal-beds with the works of public improvement, the constitution not in terms prohibiting it. See note to p. *531, *post*.

¹ Arg. *Nightingale v. Bridges*, Show. 138. See also *Case of Alton Woods*, 1 Rep. 45 a; *Alcock v. Cook*, 5 Bing. 340; *Bowman v. Middleton*, 1 Bay, 282; *ante*, p. *37 and note, p. *175 and note.

² The evidences of a man's rights — the deeds, bills of sale, promissory notes, and the like — are protected equally with his lands and chattels, or rights and franchises of any kind; and the certificate of registration and right to vote may be properly included in the category. *State v. Staten*, 6 Cold. 243. See *Davies v. McKeeby*, 5 Nev. 369.

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affecting his interests, and how far special legislation may control his rights without coming under legal condemnation. In organized society every man holds all he possesses, and looks forward to all he hopes for, through the aid and under the protection of the laws ; but as changes of circumstances and of public opinion, as well as other reasons affecting the public policy, are all the while calling for changes in the laws, and as these changes must influence more or less the value and stability of private possessions, and strengthen or destroy well-founded hopes, and as the power to make very many of them could not be disputed without denying the right of the political community to prosper and advance, it is obvious that many rights, privileges, and exemptions which usually pertain to ownership under a particular state of the law, and many reasonable expectations, cannot be regarded as vested rights in any legal sense.¹ In many cases the courts, in the exercise of their ordinary jurisdiction, cause the property vested in one person to be transferred to another, either through the exercise of a statutory power, or by the direct force of their judgments or decrees, or by means of compulsory conveyances. If in these cases the courts have jurisdiction, they proceed in accordance with " the law of the land ; " and the right of one man is divested by way of enforcing a higher and better right in another. Of these cases we do not propose to speak : constitutional questions cannot well arise concerning them, unless they are attended by circumstances of irregularity which are supposed to take them out of the general rule. All vested rights are held subject to the laws for the enforcement of public duties and private contracts, and for the punishment of wrongs ; and if they become divested through the operation of those laws, it is only by way of enforcing the obligations of justice and good order. What we desire to reach in this connection is the true meaning of the term " vested rights " when employed for the purpose of indicating the interests of which one cannot be deprived by the mere force of legislative enactment, or by any other than

¹ " A person has no property, no vested interest, in any rule of the common law. . . . Rights of property, which have been created by the common law, cannot be taken away without due process ; but the law itself, as a rule of conduct, may be changed at the will, or even at the whim of the legislature, unless prevented by constitutional limitations." *Waite*, Ch. J., in *Munn v. Illinois*, 94 U. S. Rep. 113, 134.

the * recognized modes of transferring title against the [* 359] consent of the owner, to which we have alluded.

Interests in Expectancy.

First, it would seem that a right cannot be considered a vested right, unless it is something more than such a mere expectation as may be based upon an anticipated continuance of the present general laws: it must have become a title, legal or equitable, to the present or future enjoyment of property, or to the present or future enforcement of a demand, or a legal exemption from a demand made by another. Acts of the legislature, as has been well said by Mr. Justice *Woodbury*, cannot be regarded as opposed to fundamental axioms of legislation, “unless they impair rights which are vested; because most civil rights are derived from public laws; and if, before the rights become vested in particular individuals, the convenience of the State procures amendments or repeals of those laws, those individuals have no cause of complaint. The power that authorizes or proposes to give, may always revoke before an interest is perfected in the donee.”¹ And Chancellor *Kent*, in speaking of retrospective statutes, says that while such a statute, “affecting and changing vested rights, is very generally regarded in this country as founded on unconstitutional principles, and consequently inoperative and void,” yet that “this doctrine is not understood to apply to remedial statutes, which may be of a retrospective nature, provided they do not impair contracts, or disturb absolute vested rights, and only go to confirm rights already existing, and in furtherance of the remedy by curing defects and adding to the means of enforcing existing obligations. Such statutes have been held valid when clearly just and reasonable, and conducive to the general welfare, even though they might operate in a degree upon vested rights.”²

And it is because a mere expectation of property in the future is not considered a vested right, that the rules of descent are held subject to change in their application to all estates not already

¹ *Merrill v. Sherburne*, 1 N. H. v. *Hubbard*, 19 Vt. 91; *Bridgeport v.* 213. See *Rich v. Flanders*, 39 N. H. *Housatonic R. R. Co.*, 15 Conn. 492; 304. *Baughner v. Nelson*, 9 Gill, 299; *Gil-*

² 1 *Kent*, Com. 455. See *Briggs man v. Cutts*, 23 N. H. 376, 382.

passed to the heir by the death of the owner. No one is heir to the living; and the heir presumptive has no other reason to rely upon succeeding to the property than the promise held out by the statute of descents. But this promise is no [* 360] * more than a declaration of the legislature as to its present view of public policy as regards the proper order of succession, — a view which may at any time change, and then the promise may properly be withdrawn, and a new course of descent be declared. The expectation is not property; it cannot be sold or mortgaged; it is not subject to debts; and it is not in any manner taken notice of by the law until the moment of the ancestor's death, when the statute of descents comes in, and for reasons of general public policy transfers the estate to persons occupying particular relations to the deceased in preference to all others. It is not until that moment that there is any vested right in the person who becomes heir, to be protected by the Constitution. An anticipated interest in property cannot be said to be vested in any person so long as the owner of the interest in possession has full power, by virtue of his ownership, to cut off the expectant right by grant or devise.¹

If this be so, the nature of estates must, to a certain extent, be subject to legislative control and modification.² In this country estates tail have been very generally changed into estates in fee-simple, by statutes the validity of which is not disputed.³ Such statutes operate to increase and render more valuable the interest which the tenant in tail possesses, and are not therefore open to objection by him.⁴ But no other person in these cases has any

¹ *In re Lawrence*, 1 Redfield, Sur. Rep. 310. But after property has once vested under the laws of descent, it cannot be divested by any change in those laws. *Norman v. Heist*, 5 W. & S. 171. And the right to change the law of descents in the case of the estate of a person named without his consent being had, was denied in *Beall v. Beall*, 8 Geo. 210. See *post*, p. *379 and notes.

² Smith on Stat. and Const. Construction, 412.

³ *De Mill v. Lockwood*, 3 Blatch. 56.

⁴ On the same ground it has been

held in Massachusetts that statutes converting existing estates in joint tenancy into estates in common were unobjectionable. They did not impair vested rights, but rendered the tenure more beneficial. *Holbrook v. Finney*, 4 Mass. 567; *Miller v. Miller*, 16 Mass. 59; *Anable v. Patch*, 3 Pick. 363; *Burghardt v. Turner*, 12 Pick. 534. Moreover, such statutes do no more than either tenant at the common law has a right to do, by conveying his interest to a stranger. See *Bombaugh v. Bombaugh*, 11 S. & R. 192; *Wildes v. Vanvoorhis*, 16 Gray, 147.

vested right, either in possession or expectancy, to be affected by such change; and the expectation of the heir presumptive must be subject to the same control as in other cases.¹

The cases of rights in property to result from the marriage relation must be referred to the same principle. At the common law the husband immediately on the marriage succeeded to certain rights in the real and personal estate which the wife then possessed. These rights became vested rights at once, and any subsequent alteration in the law could not take them away.² But other interests * were merely in expectancy. [* 361] He could have a right as tenant by the courtesy initiate in the wife's estates of inheritance the moment a child was born of the marriage, who might by possibility become heir to such estates. This right would be property, subject to conveyance and to be taken for debts; and must therefore be regarded as a vested right, no more subject to legislative interference than other expectant interests which have ceased to be mere contingencies and become fixed. But while this interest remains in expectancy merely, — that is to say, until it becomes initiate, — the legislature must have full right to modify or even to abolish it.³ And the same rule will apply to the case of dower; though the difference in the requisites of the two estates are such that the inchoate right to dower does not become property, or any thing more than a mere expectancy at any time before it is consummated by the husband's death.⁴ In neither of these cases does the marriage alone give a vested right. It gives only a capacity to acquire a right. The same remark may be made regarding the husband's expectant interest in the after-acquired

¹ See 1 Washb. Real Pr. 81-84 and notes. The exception to this statement, if any, must be the case of tenant in tail after possibility of issue extinct; where the estate of the tenant has ceased to be an inheritance, and a reversionary right has become vested.

² *Westervelt v. Gregg*, 12 N. Y. 208. See Mr. Bishop's criticism of this case — which, however, does not reach the general principle above stated — in 2 Bishop, Law of Married Women, § 46, and note.

³ *Hathorn v. Lyon*, 2 Mich. 93; *Tong v. Marvin*, 15 Mich. 60. And see the cases cited in the next note.

⁴ *Barbour v. Barbour*, 46 Me. 9; *Lucas v. Sawyer*, 17 Iowa, 517; *Noel v. Ewing*, 9 Ind. 57; *Moore v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 4 Sandf. 456, and 8 N. Y. 110; *Pratt v. Tefft*, 14 Mich. 191; *Reeve, Dom. Rel.* 103, note. A doubt as to this doctrine is intimated in *Dunn v. Sargeant*, 101 Mass. 340.

personalty of the wife; it is subject to any changes in the law made before his right becomes vested by the acquisition.¹

Change of Remedies.

Again: *the right to a particular remedy is not a vested right.* This is the general rule; and the exceptions are of those peculiar cases in which the remedy is part of the right itself.² As a general rule, every State has complete control over the remedies which it offers to suitors in its courts.³ It may abolish one class of courts and create another. It may give a new and additional remedy for a right or equity already in existence.⁴ And

¹ *Westervelt v. Gregg*, 12 N. Y. 208; *Norris v. Beyea*, 18 N. Y. 273; *Kelly v. McCarthy*, 3 Bradf. 7. And see *Plumb v. Sawyer*, 21 Conn. 351; *Clark v. McCreary*, 12 S. & M. 347; *Jackson v. Lyon*, 9 Cow. 664; *ante*, pp. *287-*292. On the point whether the husband can be regarded as having an interest in the wife's choses in action, before he has reduced them to possession, see Bishop, *Law of Married Women*, Vol. II. §§ 45, 46. If the wife has a right to personal property subject to a contingency, the husband's contingent interest therein cannot be taken away by subsequent legislation. *Dunn v. Sargeant*, 101 Mass. 336. In *Sutton v. Asker*, 66 N. C. 172, it was decided that where by the statute the woman's right of dower was subject to be defeated by the husband's conveyance, a subsequent statute restoring her common-law rights was inoperative as to all existing marriages.

² See *ante*, p. *290, and cases cited. It has been held in some cases that the giving of a lien by statute does not confer a vested right, and it may be taken away by a repeal of the statute. See *ante*, *287, note.

³ *Rosier v. Hale*, 10 Iowa, 470; *Smith v. Bryan*, 34 Ill. 377; *Lord v. Chadbourne*, 42 Me. 429; *Rockwell*

v. Hubbell's Adm'rs, 2 Doug. (Mich.) 197; *Cusic v. Douglas*, 8 Kan. 123; *Holloway v. Sherman*, 12 Iowa, 282; *McCormick v. Rusch*, 15 Iowa, 127; *McArthur v. Goddin*, 12 Bush, 274; *Grundy v. Commonwealth*, 12 Bush, 350; *Briscoe v. Anketell*, 28 Miss. 361.

⁴ *Hope v. Jackson*, 2 Yerg. 125; *Foster v. Essex Bank*, 16 Mass. 245; *Paschall v. Whitsett*, 11 Ala. 472; *Commonwealth v. Commissioners, &c.*, 6 Pick. 508; *Whipple v. Farrar*, 3 Mich. 436; *United States v. Sampereyac*, 1 Hemp. 118; *Sutherland v. De Leon*, 1 Tex. 250; *Anonymous*, 2 Stew. 228. See also *Lewis v. McElvain*, 16 Ohio, 347; *Trustees, &c. v. McCaughey*, 2 Ohio, n. s. 152; *Hepburn v. Curts*, 7 Watts, 300; *Schenley v. Commonwealth*, 36 Penn. St. 29; *Bacon v. Callender*, 6 Mass. 303; *Brackett v. Norcross*, 1 Greenl. 92; *Ralston v. Lothain*, 18 Ind. 303; *White School House v. Post*, 31 Conn. 241; *Van Rensselaer v. Hayes*, 19 N. Y. 68; *Van Rensselaer v. Ball*, 19 N. Y. 100; *Sedgwick v. Bunker*, 16 Kan. 498; *Danville v. Pace*, 25 Grat. 1. Thus it may give a legal remedy where before there was only one in equity. *Bartlett v. Lang*, 2 Ala. n. s. 401. In *Bolton v. Johns*, 5 Penn. St. 145, the extreme ground was taken that the legislature might

it may abolish old remedies and *substitute new; or [* 362] even without substituting any, if a reasonable remedy still remained.¹ If a statute providing a remedy is repealed while proceedings are pending, such proceedings will be thereby determined, unless the legislature shall otherwise provide;² and if it be amended instead of repealed, the judgment pronounced in such proceedings must be according to the law as it then stands.³ And any rule or regulation in regard to the remedy which does not, under pretence of modifying or regulating it, take away or impair the right itself, cannot be regarded as beyond the proper province of legislation.⁴

But a vested right of action is property in the same sense in which tangible things are property, and is equally protected against arbitrary interference. Where it springs from contract, or from the principles of the common law, it is not competent for the legislature to take it away.⁵ And every man is entitled to a

give a lien on property for a prior debt, where no contract would be violated in doing so. In *Towle v. Eastern Railroad*, 18 N. H. 546, the power of the legislature to give retrospectively a remedy for consequential damages caused by the taking of property for a public use was denied.

¹ *Stocking v. Hunt*, 3 Denio, 274; *Van Rensselaer v. Read*, 26 N. Y. 558; *Lennon v. New York*, 55 N. Y. 361; *Parker v. Shannohouse*, 1 Phil. (N. C.) 209.

² *Bank of Hamilton v. Dudley*, 2 Pet. 492; *Ludlow v. Jackson*, 3 Ohio, 553; *Eaton v. United States*, 5 Cranch, 281; *Schooner Rachel v. United States*, 6 Cranch, 329. If an act is repealed without any saving of rights, no judgment can afterwards be taken under it. *French v. State*, 53 Miss. 651; *State v. Passaic*, 36 N. J. 382; *Menard County v. Kincaid*, 71 Ill. 587; *Musgrove v. Vicksburg, &c. R. R. Co.*, 50 Miss. 677. But it is well said in Pennsylvania that before a statute should be construed to take away the remedy for a prior injury, it should clearly appear that

it embraces the very case. *Chalker v. Ives*, 55 Penn. St. 81. And see *Newsom v. Greenwood*, 4 Oreg. 119.

³ See cases cited in last note. Also *Commonwealth v. Duane*, 1 Binney, 601; *United States v. Passmore*, 4 Dall. 372; *Patterson v. Philbrook*, 9 Mass. 151; *Commonwealth v. Marshall*, 11 Pick. 350; *Commonwealth v. Kimball*, 21 Pick. 373; *Hartung v. People*, 21 N. Y. 99; *State v. Daley*, 29 Conn. 272; *Rathbun v. Wheeler*, 29 Ind. 601; *State v. Norwood*, 12 Md. 195; *Bristol v. Supervisors, &c.*, 20 Mich. 95; *Sumner v. Miller*, 64 N. C. 688.

⁴ See *ante*, pp. *287-*292; *Lennon v. New York*, 55 N. Y. 361.

⁵ *Dash v. Van Kleeck*, 7 Johns. 477; *Streubel v. Milwaukee and M. R. R. Co.*, 12 Wis. 67; *Clark v. Clark*, 10 N. H. 386; *Westervelt v. Gregg*, 12 N. Y. 211; *Thornton v. Turner*, 11 Minn. 339; *Ward v. Brainerd*, 1 Aik. 121; *Keith v. Ware*, 2 Vt. 174; *Lyman v. Mower*, 2 Vt. 517; *Kendall v. Dodge*, 3 Vt. 360; *State v. Auditor, &c.*, 33 Mo. 287; *Griffin v. Wilcox*, 21 Ind. 370; *Norris v. Doniphan*, 4 Met. (Ky.) 385; *Terrill v. Rankin*, 3

certain remedy in the law for all wrongs against his person or his property, and cannot be compelled to buy justice, or to submit to conditions not imposed upon his fellows as a means of obtaining it.¹ Nor can a party by his misconduct so forfeit a right that it may be taken from him without judicial proceedings in which the forfeiture shall be declared in due form. Forfeitures of rights and property cannot be adjudged by legislative act, and confiscations without a judicial hearing after due notice would be void as not being due process of law.² Even Congress, it has been held, has no power to protect parties assuming to act under the authority of the general government, during the existence of a civil war, by depriving persons illegally arrested by them of all [*363] redress in the courts.³ * And if the legislature cannot

Bush, 453; Willar v. Baltimore, &c. Association, 45 Md. 546. An equitable title to lands, of which the legal title is in the State, is under the same constitutional protection that the legal title would be. Wright v. Hawkins, 28 Tex. 452. Where an individual is allowed to recover a sum as a penalty, the right may be taken away at any time before judgment. Oriental Bank v. Freeze, 6 Shep. 109; Engle v. Schurtz, 1 Mich. 150; Confiscation Cases, 7 Wall. 454; Washburn v. Franklin, 35 Barb. 599; Welch v. Wadsworth, 30 Conn. 149; O'Kelly v. Athens Manuf. Co., 36 Geo. 51; United States v. Tynen, 11 Wall. 88; Chicago & Alton R. R. Co. v. Adler, 56 Ill. 350; Van Inwagen v. Chicago, 61 Ill. 31; Lyon v. Norris, 15 Geo. 480; *post*, p. *383. See also Curtis v. Leavitt, 17 Barb. 309, and 15 N. Y. 9; Coles v. Madison County, Breese, 115; Parmelee v. Lawrence, 48 Ill. 331; *post*, p. *375-376.

¹ Thus, a person cannot be precluded by test oaths from maintaining suits. McFarland v. Butler, 8 Minn. 116; *ante*, p. *289, note. See *post*, pp. *368, *369, note.

² Griffin v. Mixon, 38 Miss. 434. See next note. Also Rison v. Farr, 24 Ark. 161; Woodruff v. Scruggs,

27 Ark. 26; Hodgson v. Millward, 3 Grant's Cas. 406. But no constitutional principle is violated by a statute which allows judgment to be entered up against a defendant who has been served with process, unless within a certain number of days he files an affidavit of merits. Hunt v. Lucas, 97 Mass. 404.

³ Griffin v. Wilcox, 21 Ind. 370. In this case the act of Congress of March 3, 1863, which provided "that any order of the President or under his authority, made at any time during the existence of the present rebellion, shall be a defence in all courts, to any action or prosecution, civil or criminal, pending or to be commenced, for any search, seizure, arrest, or imprisonment, made, done, or committed, or acts omitted to be done, under and by virtue of such order, or under color of any law of Congress," was held to be unconstitutional. The same decision was made in Johnson v. Jones, 44 Ill. 142. It was said in the first of these cases that "this act was passed to deprive the citizens of all redress for illegal arrests and imprisonments; it was not needed as a protection for making such as are legal, because the common law gives ample protection for making legal arrests and imprisonments." And it

confiscate property or rights, neither can it authorize individuals to assume at their option powers of police, which they may exercise in the condemnation and sale of property offending against their regulations, or for the satisfaction of their charges and expenses in its management and control, rendered or incurred without the consent of its owners.¹ And a statute

may be added that those acts which are justified by military or martial law are equally legal with those justified by the common law. So in *Hubbard v. Brainerd*, 35 Conn. 563, it was decided that Congress could not take away a vested right to sue for and recover back an illegal tax which had been paid under protest to a collector of the national revenue. See also *Bryan v. Walker*, 64 N. C. 146. Nor can the right to have a void tax sale set aside be made conditional on the payment of the illegal tax. *Wilson v. McKenna*, 52 Ill. 44; and other cases cited, *post*, pp. *368, *369, note. The case of *Norris v. Doniphan*, 4 Met. (Ky.) 385, may properly be cited in this connection. It was there held that the act of Congress of July 17, 1862, "to suppress insurrection, to punish treason and rebellion, to seize and confiscate the property of rebels, and for other purposes," in so far as it undertook to authorize the confiscation of the property of citizens as a punishment for treason and other crimes, by proceedings *in rem* in any district in which the property might be, without presentment and indictment by a grand jury, without arrest or summons of the owner, and upon such evidence of his guilt only as would be proof of any fact in admiralty or revenue cases, was unconstitutional and void, and therefore that Congress had no power to prohibit the State courts from giving the owners of property seized the relief they would be entitled to under the State laws. A statute which makes a constitutional right to vote depend upon an

impossible condition is void. *Davies v. McKeeby*, 5 Nev. 369. See further *State v. Staten*, 6 Cold. 243; *Rison v. Farr*, 24 Ark. 161; *Hodgson v. Millward*, 3 Grant, 406. Where no express power of removal is conferred on the executive, he cannot declare an office forfeited for misbehavior; but the forfeiture must be declared in judicial proceedings. *Page v. Hardin*, 8 B. Monr. 618; *State v. Pritchard*, 36 N. J. 101.

¹ The log-driving and booming corporations, which were authorized to be formed under a general law in Michigan, were empowered, whenever logs or lumber were put into navigable streams without adequate force and means provided for preventing obstructions, to take charge of the same, and cause it to be run, driven, boomed, &c., at the owner's expense; and it gave them a lien on the same to satisfy all just and reasonable charges, with power to sell the property for those charges and for the expenses of sale, on notice, either served personally on the owner, or posted as therein provided. In *Ames v. Port Huron Log-Driving and Booming Co.*, 11 Mich. 147, it was held that the power which this law assumed to confer was in the nature of a public office; and *Campbell, J.*, says: "It is difficult to perceive by what process a public office can be obtained or exercised without either election or appointment. The powers of government are parcelled out by the Constitution, which certainly contemplates some official responsibility. Every officer not expressly exempted is required to take an oath of office as a preliminary to

[*364] * which authorizes a party to seize the property of another, without process or warrant, and to sell it without notification to the owner, for the punishment of a private trespass, and in order to enforce a penalty against the owner, can find no justification in the Constitution.¹

discharging his duties. It is absurd to suppose that any official power can exist in any person by his own assumption, or by the employment of some other private person; and still more so, to recognize in such an assumption a power of depriving individuals of their property. And it is plain that the exercise of such a power is an act in its nature public, and not private. The case, however, involves more than the assumption of control. The corporation, or rather its various agents, must of necessity determine when the case arises justifying interference; and having assumed possession, it assesses its own charges; and having assessed them, proceeds to sell the property seized to pay them, with the added expense of such sale. These proceedings are all *ex parte*, and are all proceedings *in invitum*. Their validity must therefore be determined by the rules applicable to such cases. Except in those cases where proceedings to collect the public revenue may stand upon a peculiar footing of their own, it is an inflexible principle of constitutional right that no person can legally be divested of his property without remuneration, or against his will, unless he is allowed a hearing before an impartial tribunal, where he may contest the claim set up against him, and be allowed to meet it on the law and the facts. When his property is wanted *in specie*, for public purposes, there are methods assured to him whereby its value can be ascertained. Where a debt or penalty or forfeiture may be set up against him, the determination of his liability becomes a judicial question; and all judicial functions are required by the

Constitution to be exercised by courts of justice, or judicial officers regularly chosen. He can only be reached through the forms of law upon a regular hearing, unless he has by contract referred the matter to another mode of determination."

¹ A statute of New York authorized any person to take into his custody and possession any animal which might be trespassing upon his lands, and give notice of the seizure to a justice or commissioner of highways of the town, who should proceed to sell the animal after posting notice. From the proceeds of the sale, the officer was to retain his fees, pay the person taking up the animal fifty cents, and also compensation for keeping it, and the balance to the owner, if he should claim it within a year. In *Rockwell v. Nearing*, 85 N. Y. 307, 308, *Porter, J.*, says of this statute: "The legislature has no authority either to deprive the citizen of his property for other than public purposes, or to authorize its seizure without process or warrant, by persons other than the owner, for the mere punishment of a private trespass. So far as the act in question relates to animals trespassing on the premises of the captor, the proceedings it authorizes have not even the mocking semblance of due process of law. The seizure may be privately made; the party making it is permitted to conceal the property on his own premises; he is protected, though the trespass was due to his own connivance or neglect; he is permitted to take what does not belong to him without notice to the owner, though that owner is near and known; he is

Limitation Laws.

Notwithstanding the protection which the law gives to vested rights, it is possible for a party to debar himself of the right to assert the same in the courts, by his own negligence or laches. * If one who is dispossessed "be negligent for a [* 365] long and unreasonable time, the law refuses afterwards to lend him any assistance to recover the possession merely, both to punish his neglect (*nam leges vigilantibus, non dormientibus subveniunt*), and also because it is presumed that the supposed wrong-doer has in such a length of time procured a legal title, otherwise he would sooner have been sued."¹ Statutes of limitation are passed which fix upon a reasonable time within which a party is permitted to bring suit for the recovery of his rights, and which, on failure to do so, establish a legal presumption against him that he has no rights in the premises. Such a statute is a statute of repose.² Every government is under obligation to its citizens to afford them all needful legal remedies;³ but

allowed to sell, through the intervention of an officer, and without even the form of judicial proceedings, an animal in which he has no interest by way either of title, mortgage, pledge, or lien; and all to the end that he may receive compensation for detaining it without the consent of the owner, and a fee of fifty cents for his services as an informer. He levies without process, condemns without proof, and sells without execution." And he distinguishes these proceedings from those in distraining cattle, *damage feasant*, which are always remedial, and under which the party is authorized to detain the property in pledge for the payment of his damages. See also opinion by *Morgan, J.*, in the same case, pp. 314-317, and the opinions of the several judges in *Wynehamer v. People*, 13 N. Y. 395, 419, 434, and 468. Compare *Campbell v. Evans*, 45 N. Y. 356; *Cook v. Gregg*, 46 N. Y. 439.

¹ 3 Bl. Com. 188; Broom, *Legal Maxims*, 857.

² Such a statute was formerly construed with strictness, and the defence under it was looked upon as unconscionable, and not favored; but Mr. Justice *Story* has well said, it has often been matter of regret in modern times that the decisions had not proceeded upon principles better adapted to carry into effect the real objects of the statute; that instead of being viewed in an unfavorable light as an unjust and discreditable defence, it had not received such support as would have made it what it was intended to be, emphatically a statute of repose. It is a wise and beneficial law, not designed merely to raise a presumption of payment of a just debt from lapse of time, but to afford security against stale demands after the true state of the transaction may have been forgotten, or be incapable of explanation by reason of the death or removal of witnesses. *Bell v. Morrison*, 1 Pet. 360. See *Leffingwell v. Warren*, 2 Black, 599.

³ *Call v. Hagger*, 8 Mass. 430.

it is not bound to keep its courts open indefinitely for one who neglects or refuses to apply for redress until it may fairly be presumed that the means by which the other party might disprove his claim are lost in the lapse of time.¹

When the period prescribed by statute has once run, so as to cut off the remedy which one might have had for the recovery of property in the possession of another, the title to the property, irrespective of the original right, is regarded in the law as vested in the possessor, who is entitled to the same protection in respect to it which the owner is entitled to in other cases. A subsequent repeal of the limitation law could not be given a retroactive effect, so as to disturb this title.² It is vested as completely and perfectly, and is as safe from legislative interference as it would have been had it been perfected in the owner by grant, or by any species of assurance.³

¹ *Beal v. Nason*, 2 Shep. 344; *Bell v. Morrison*, 1 Pet. 360; *Stearns v. Gittings*, 28 Ill. 387; *State v. Jones*, 21 Md. 437.

² *Brent v. Chapman*, 5 Cranch, 358; *Newby's Adm'rs v. Blakey*, 3 H. & M. 57; *Parish v. Eager*, 15 Wis. 582; *Baggs's Appeal*, 43 Penn. St. 512; *Leffingwell v. Warren*, 2 Black, 599. See cases cited in next note.

³ Although there is controversy on this point, we consider the text fully warranted by the following cases: *Holden v. James*, 11 Mass. 396; *Wright v. Oakley*, 5 Met. 400; *Lewis v. Webb*, 3 Me. 326; *Atkinson v. Dunlap*, 50 Me. 111; *Davis v. Minor*, 1 How. (Miss.) 183; *Hicks v. Steigleman*, 49 Miss. 377; *Knox v. Cleveland*, 13 Wis. 245; *Sprecker v. Wakelee*, 11 Wis. 432; *Pleasants v. Rohrer*, 17 Wis. 577; *Moor v. Luce*, 29 Penn. St. 260; *Morton v. Sharkey*, McCahon, 113; *McKinney v. Springer*, 8 Blackf. 506; *Stipp v. Brown*, 2 Ind. 647; *Briggs v. Hubbard*, 19 Vt. 86; *Wires v. Farr*, 25 Vt. 41; *Woart v. Winnick*, 3 N. H. 473; *Rockport v. Walden*, 54 N. H. 167; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 131; *Thompson v. Caldwell*, 3 Lit. 137; *Couch v. McKee*, 1 Eng. (Ark.)

495; *Girdner v. Stephens*, 1 Heisk. 280; s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 700; *Yancy v. Yancy*, 5 Heisk. 353; s. c. 13 Am. Rep. 5; *Bradford v. Shine's Exr's*, 13 Fla. 393; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 339; *Lockhart v. Horn*, 1 Woods, 628; *Horbach v. Miller*, 4 Neb. 81; *Pitman v. Bump*, 5 Oreg. 17; *Thompson v. Reid*, 41 Iowa, 48; *Reformed Church v. Schoolcraft*, 65 N. Y. 134. In some cases a disposition has been manifested to distinguish between the case of property adversely possessed, and a claim not enforced; and while it is conceded that the title to the property cannot be disturbed after the statute has run, it is held that the claim, under new legislation may still be enforced; the statute of limitations pertaining to the remedy only, and not barring the right. So it was held in *Jones v. Jones*, 18 Ala. 248, where the remedy on the claim in dispute had been barred by the statute of another State where the debtor then resided. And see *Bentinck v. Franklin*, 38 Tex. 458. But this last-mentioned doctrine is rejected in an opinion of much force by *Dixon*, Ch. J., in *Brown v. Parker*, 28 Wis. 21, 28. And see *Rockport v. Walden*, 54 N. H. 167; s. c. 20 Am.

All limitation laws, however, must proceed on the theory that the party, by lapse of time and omissions on his part, has forfeited his right to assert his title in the law.¹ Where they relate to * property, it seems not to be essential that the [* 366] adverse claimant should be in actual possession;² but one who is himself in the legal enjoyment of his property cannot have his rights therein forfeited to another, for failure to bring suit against that other within a time specified to test the validity of a claim which the latter asserts, but takes no steps to enforce. It has consequently been held that a statute which, after a lapse of five years, makes a recorded deed purporting to be executed under a statutory power conclusive evidence of a good title, could not be valid as a limitation law against the original owner in possession of the land. Limitation laws cannot compel a resort to legal proceedings by one who is already in the complete enjoyment of all he claims.³

Rep. 131; *McMerty v. Morrison*, 62 Mo. 140; *Goodman v. Munks*, 8 Port. (Ala.) 84; *Harrison v. Stacy*, 6 Rob. (La.) 15; *Baker v. Stonebraker's Adm'r*, 36 Mo. 338; *Shelby v. Guy*, 11 Wheat. 361. But the statute of limitations may be suspended for a period as to demands not already barred. *Wardlaw v. Buzard*, 15 Rich. 158; *Caperton v. Martin*, 4 W. Va. 138; s. c. 6 Am. Rep. 270; *Bender v. Crawford*, 33 Tex. 745; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 270.

¹ *Stearns v. Gittings*, 23 Ill. 389, per *Walker, J.*; *Sturgis v. Crowninshield*, 4 Wheat. 207, per *Marshall, Ch. J.*; *Pearce v. Patton*, 7 B. Monr. 162; *Griffin v. McKenzie*, 7 Geo. 163; *Coleman v. Holmes*, 44 Ala. 125.

² *Stearns v. Gittings*, 23 Ill. 389; *Hill v. Kricke*, 11 Wis. 442.

³ *Groesbeck v. Seeley*, 13 Mich. 329. In *Case v. Dean*, 16 Mich. 12, it was held that this statute could not be enforced as a limitation law in favor of the party in possession, inasmuch as it did not proceed on the idea of limiting the time for bringing suit, but by a conclusive rule of evidence sought to pass over the prop-

erty to the claimant under the statutory sale in all cases, irrespective of possession. See also *Baker v. Kelly*, 11 Minn. 480; *Eldridge v. Kuehl*, 27 Iowa, 160, 173. The case of *Leffingwell v. Warren*, 2 Black, 599, is *contra*. That case follows Wisconsin decisions. In the leading case of *Hill v. Kricke*, 11 Wis. 442, the holder of the original title was not in possession; and what was decided was that it was not necessary for the holder of the tax title to be in possession in order to claim the benefit of the statute; ejectment against a claimant being permitted by law when the lands were unoccupied. This circumstance of possession or want of possession in the person whose right is to be extinguished seems to us of vital importance. How can a man justly be held guilty of laches in not asserting claims to property, when he already possesses and enjoys the property? The old maxim is, "That which was originally void cannot by mere lapse of time be made valid;" and if a void claim by force of an act of limitation can ripen into a conclusive title as against the owner in possession, the

All statutes of limitation, also, must proceed on the idea that the party has full opportunity afforded him to try his right in the courts. A statute could not bar the existing right of claimants without affording this opportunity: if it should attempt to do so, it would be not a statute of limitations, but an unlawful attempt to extinguish rights arbitrarily, whatever might be the purport of its provisions. It is essential that such statutes allow a reasonable time after they take effect for the commencement of suits upon existing causes of action; ¹ though what shall be considered a reasonable time must be settled by the judgment of the [* 367] legislature, into the wisdom of * whose decision in establishing the period of legal bar it does not pertain to the jurisdiction of the courts to inquire.²

policy underlying that species of legislation must be something beyond what has been generally supposed.

¹ So held of a statute which took effect some months after its passage, and which, in its operation upon certain classes of cases, would have extinguished adverse claims unless asserted by suit before the act took effect. *Price v. Hopkin*, 18 Mich. 318. See also *Call v. Hagger*, 8 Mass. 423; *Proprietors, &c. v. Laboree*, 2 Greenl. 294; *Society, &c. v. Wheeler*, 2 Gall. 141; *Blackford v. Peltier*, 1 Blackf. 36; *Thornton v. Turner*, 11 Minn. 339; *Osborn v. Jaines*, 17 Wis. 573; *Morton v. Sharkey*, McCahon (Kan.), 113; *Berry v. Ramsdell*, 4 Met. (Ky.) 296; *Ludwig v. Stewart*, 32 Mich. 27; *Hart v. Bostwick*, 14 Fla. 162. In the case last cited it was held that a statute which only allowed thirty days in which to bring action on an existing demand was unreasonable and void. And see what is said in *Auld v. Butcher*, 2 Kan. 135. Compare *Davidson v. Lawrence*, 49 Geo. 335; *Kimbrow v. Bank of Fulton*, 49 Geo. 419. In *Pereless v. Watertown*, 6 Biss. 79, Judge *Hopkins*, U. S. District Judge, decided that a limitation

of one year for bringing suits on municipal securities of a class generally sold abroad was unreasonable and void. But a statute giving a new remedy against a railroad company for an injury, may limit to a short time, *e. g.* six months, the time for bringing suit. *O'Bannon v. Louisville, &c. R. R. Co.*, 8 Bush, 348. So the remedy by suit against stockholders for corporate debts, it is held, may be limited to one year. *Adamson v. Davis*, 47 Mo. 268.

² *Stearns v. Gittings*, 23 Ill. 387; *Call v. Hagger*, 8 Mass. 430; *Smith v. Morrison*, 22 Pick. 430; *Price v. Hopkin*, 13 Mich. 318; *De Moss v. Newton*, 31 Ind. 219. But see *Berry v. Ramsdell*, 4 Met. (Ky.) 296.

It may be remarked here, that statutes of limitation do not apply to the State unless they so provide expressly. *Gibson v. Choteau*, 13 Wall. 92. And State limitation laws do not apply to the United States. *United States v. Hoar*, 2 Mas. 311; *People v. Gilbert*, 18 Johns. 228. And it has been held that the right to maintain a public nuisance cannot be acquired under the statute. *State v. Franklin Falls Co.*, 49 N. H. 240.

Alterations in the Rules of Evidence.

It must also be evident that *a right to have one's controversies determined by existing rules of evidence is not a vested right*. These rules pertain to the remedies which the State provides for its citizens; and generally in legal contemplation they neither enter into and constitute a part of any contract, nor can be regarded as being of the essence of any right which a party may seek to enforce. Like other rules affecting the remedy, they must therefore at all times be subject to modification and control by the legislature;¹ and the changes which are enacted may lawfully be made applicable to existing causes of action, even in those States in which retrospective laws are forbidden. For the law as changed would only prescribe rules for presenting the evidence in legal controversies in the future; and it could not therefore be called retrospective even though some of the controversies upon which it may act were in progress before. It has accordingly been held in New Hampshire that a statute which removed the disqualification of interest, and allowed parties in suits to testify, might lawfully apply to existing causes of action.² So may a statute which modifies the common-law rule excluding parol evidence to vary the terms of a written contract;³ and a statute making the protest of a promissory note evidence of the facts therein stated.⁴ These and the like cases will sufficiently illustrate the general rule, that the whole subject is under the control of the legislature, which prescribes such rules for the trial and determination as well of existing as of future rights and controversies as in its judgment will most completely subserve the ends of justice.⁵

¹ *Kendall v. Kingston*, 5 Mass. 533; *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 349, per *Marshall*, Ch. J.; *Fales v. Wadsworth*, 23 Me. 533; *Karney v. Paisley*, 13 Iowa, 89; *Commonwealth v. Williams*, 6 Gray, 1; *Hickox v. Tallman*, 38 Barb. 608; *Webb v. Den*, 17 How. 576; *Pratt v. Jones*, 25 Vt. 303. See *ante*, p. *288 and note.

² *Rich v. Flanders*, 39 N. H. 323. A very full and satisfactory examination of the whole subject will be found in this case. To the same

effect is *Southwick v. Southwick*, 49 N. Y. 510. And see *Cowan v. McCutchen*, 43 Miss. 207; *Carothers v. Hurly*, 41 Miss. 71.

³ *Gibbs v. Gale*, 7 Md. 76.

⁴ *Fales v. Wadsworth*, 23 Me. 553.

⁵ Per *Marshall*, Ch. J., in *Ogden v. Saunders*, 12 Wheat. 249; *Webb v. Den*, 17 How. 577; *Delaplaine v. Cook*, 7 Wis. 54; *Kendall v. Kingston*, 5 Mass. 534; *Fowler v. Chatterton*, 6 Bing. 258; *Himmelman v. Carpentier*, 47 Cal. 42.

[* 368] * A strong instance in illustration of legislative control over evidence will be found in the laws of some of the States in regard to conveyances of lands upon sales to satisfy delinquent taxes. Independent of special statutory rule on the subject, such conveyances would not be evidence of title. They are executed under a statutory power; and it devolves upon the claimant under them to show that the successive steps which under the statute lead to such conveyance have been taken. But it cannot be doubted that this rule may be so changed as to make a tax-deed *prima facie* evidence that all the proceedings have been regular, and that the purchaser has acquired under them a complete title.¹ The burden of proof is thereby changed from one party to the other; the legal presumption which the statute creates in favor of the purchaser being sufficient, in connection with the deed, to establish his case, unless it is overcome by countervailing testimony. Statutes making defective records evidence of valid conveyances are of a similar nature; and these usually, perhaps always, have reference to records before made, and provide for making them competent evidence where before they were merely void.² But they divest no title, and are not even retrospective in character. They merely establish what the legislature regards as a reasonable and just rule for the presentation by the parties of their rights before the courts in the future.

But there are fixed bounds to the power of the legislature over this subject which cannot be exceeded. As to what shall be evidence, and which party shall assume the burden of proof in civil cases, its authority is practically unrestricted, so long as its regulations are impartial and uniform; but it has no power to establish rules which, under pretence of regulating the presentation of evidence, go so far as altogether to preclude a party from exhibiting his rights. Except in those cases which fall within the familiar doctrine of estoppel at the common law, or other cases resting upon the like reasons, it would not, we apprehend, be in the power

¹ *Hand v. Ballou*, 12 N. Y. 543; 140; *Wright v. Dunham*, 13 Mich. 414; *Abbott v. Lindenbower*, 42 Mo. 162; s. c. 46 Mo. 291. The rule once established may be abolished, even as to existing deeds. *Hickox v. Tallman*, 38 Barb. 608.
² See *Webb v. Den*, 17 How. 577.

of the legislature to declare that a particular item of evidence should preclude a party from establishing his rights in opposition to it. In judicial investigations the law of the land requires an opportunity for a trial;¹ and there * can be no [* 369] trial if only one party is suffered to produce his proofs.

The most formal conveyance may be a fraud or a forgery; public officers may connive with rogues to rob the citizen of his property; witnesses may testify or officers certify falsely, and records may be collusively manufactured for dishonest purposes; and that legislation which would preclude the fraud or wrong being shown, and deprive the party wronged of all remedy, has no justification in the principles of natural justice or of constitutional law. A statute, therefore, which should make a tax-deed conclusive evidence of a complete title, and preclude the owner of the original title from showing its invalidity, would be void, because being not a law regulating evidence, but an unconstitutional confiscation of property.² And a statute which should

¹ *Tift v. Griffin*, 5 Geo. 185; *Lenz v. Charlton*, 23 Wis. 482; *Conway v. Cable*, 37 Ill. 89; *ante*, p. *362, note; *post*, pp. *382–*383 and notes.

² *Groesbeck v. Seeley*, 13 Mich. 329; *Case v. Dean*, 16 Mich. 13; *White v. Flynn*, 23 Ind. 46; *Corbin v. Hill*, 21 Iowa, 70; *Abbott v. Lindenbower*, 42 Mo. 162; s. c. 46 Mo. 291. And see the well-reasoned case of *McCready v. Sexton*, 29 Iowa, 356. Also *Wright v. Cradlebaugh*, 3 Nev. 349. As to how far the legislature may make the tax-deed conclusive evidence that mere irregularities have not intervened in the proceedings, see *Smith v. Cleveland*, 17 Wis. 556; *Allen v. Armstrong*, 16 Iowa, 508. Undoubtedly the legislature may dispense with mere matters of form in the proceedings as well after they have taken place as before; but this is quite a different thing from making tax-deeds conclusive on points material to the interest of the property owner. See further, *Wantlan v. White*, 19 Ind. 470; *People v. Mitchell*, 45 Barb. 212; *McCready v. Sexton*, *supra*. It is not competent

for the legislature to compel an owner of land to redeem it from a void tax sale as a condition on which he shall be allowed to assert his title against it. *Conway v. Cable*, 37 Ill. 82; *Hart v. Henderson*, 17 Mich. 218; *Wilson v. McKenna*, 52 Ill. 44; *Reed v. Tyler*, 56 Ill. 292; *Dean v. Borchsenius*, 30 Wis. 236. But it seems that if the tax purchaser has paid taxes and made improvements, the payment for these may be made a condition precedent to a suit in ejectment against him. *Pope v. Macon*, 23 Ark. 644. The case of *Wright v. Cradlebaugh*, 3 Nev. 349, is valuable in this connection. “We apprehend,” says *Beatty*, Ch. J., “that it is beyond the power of the legislature to restrain a defendant in any suit from setting up a good defence to an action against him. The legislature could not directly take the property of A. to pay the taxes of B. Neither can it indirectly do so by depriving A. of the right of setting up in his answer that his separate property has been jointly assessed with that of B., and asserting his right to pay his own taxes without

make the certificate or opinion of an officer conclusive evidence of the illegality of an existing contract would be equally nugatory;¹ though perhaps if parties should enter into a contract in view of such a statute then existing, its provisions might properly be regarded as assented to and incorporated in their contract, and therefore binding upon them.²

Retrospective Laws.

Regarding the circumstances under which a man may be said to have a vested right to a defence against a demand made by another, it is somewhat difficult to lay down a comprehensive rule which the authorities will justify. It is certain that he who has satisfied a demand cannot have it revived against him, and he who has become released from a demand by the operation of the statute of limitations is equally protected.³ In both cases the demand is gone, and to restore it would be to create a new contract for the parties,—a thing quite beyond the power of legislation.⁴ So he who was never bound, either legally or equitably, cannot have a demand created against him by mere legislative enactment.⁵

being incumbered with those of B. . . . Due process of law not only requires that a party shall be properly brought into court, but that he shall have the opportunity when in court to establish any fact which, according to the usages of the common law or the provisions of the constitution, would be a protection to him or his property." See *Taylor v. Miles*, 5 Kan. 498; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 558.

¹ *Young v. Beardsley*, 11 Paige, 93. An act to authorize persons whose sheep are killed by dogs, to present their claim to the selectmen of the town for allowance and payment by the town, and giving the town after payment an action against the owner of the dog for the amount so paid, is void, as taking away trial by jury, and as authorizing the selectmen to pass upon one's rights without giving him an opportunity to be heard. *East Kingston v. Towle*, 48 N. H. 57; s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 174.

² See *post*, p. *403, note.

³ *Ante*, p. *365, note, and cases cited.

⁴ *Albertson v. Landon*, 42 Conn. 209; *Ohio & M. R. R. Co. v. Lackey*, 78 Ill. 55. In this last case it was decided not to be competent to make a railroad company responsible for the coroner's inquest and burial of persons dying on the cars, or killed by collision or other accident occurring to the cars, &c., irrespective of any wrong or negligence of the company or its servants. In *A. & N. R. R. Co. v. Baty*, Sup. Ct. Neb., Oct. Term, 1877, it is held incompetent to make a railroad company liable to double the value of stock accidentally injured or destroyed on the railroad track.

⁵ In *Medford v. Learned*, 16 Mass. 215, it was held that where a pauper had received support from the parish, to which by law he was entitled, a subsequent legislative act could not

But there are many cases in which, by existing laws, defences based upon mere informalities are allowed in suits upon contracts, or in respect to legal proceedings, in some of which a regard to substantial justice would warrant the legislature in interfering to take away the defence if it possesses the power to do so.

* In regard to these cases, we think investigation of [* 370] the authorities will show that *a party has no vested right in a defence based upon an informality not affecting his substantial equities*. And this brings us to a particular examination of a class of statutes which is constantly coming under the consideration of the courts, and which are known as *retrospective laws*, by reason of their reaching back to and giving some different legal effect to some previous transaction to that which it had under the law when it took place.

There are numerous cases which hold that retrospective laws are not obnoxious to constitutional objection, while in others they have been held to be void. The different decisions have been based upon diversities in the facts which make different principles applicable. There is no doubt of the right of the legislature to pass statutes which reach back to and change or modify the effect of prior transactions, provided retrospective laws are not forbidden, *eo nomine* by the State constitution, and provided further that no other objection exists to them than their retrospective character.¹ Nevertheless legislation of this character is exceedingly liable to abuse; and it is a sound rule of construction that a statute should have a prospective operation only, unless its terms show clearly a legislative intention that it should operate retrospectively.² And some of the States have deemed it

make him liable by suit to refund the cost of the support. This case was approved and followed in *People v. Supervisors of Columbia*, 43 N. Y. 135. See *ante*, p. *362 and note; *Towle v. Eastern R. R.*, 18 N. H. 546.

¹ *Thornton v. McGrath*, 1 Duvall, 349; *State v. Squires*, 26 Iowa, 340; *Beach v. Walker*, 6 Conn. 197; *Schenley v. Commonwealth*, 36 Penn. St. 57; *Shonk v. Brown*, 61 Penn. 320; *Lane v. Nelson*, 79 Penn. St. 407.

² *Dash v. Van Kleeck*, 7 Johns. 477; *Sayre v. Wisner*, 8 Wend. 661; *Watkins v. Haight*, 18 Johns. 138;

Bay v. Gage, 36 Barb. 447; *Norris v. Beyea*, 13 N. Y. 273; *Drake v. Gilmore*, 52 N. Y. 389; *Quackenbush v. Danks*, 1 Denio, 128; *Whitman v. Hapgood*, 13 Mass. 464; *Medford v. Learned*, 16 Mass. 215; *Gerry v. Stoneham*, 1 Allen, 319; *Perkins v. Perkins*, 7 Conn. 558; *Plumb v. Sawyer*, 21 Conn. 351; *Hubbard v. Brainerd*, 35 Conn. 563; *Sturgis v. Hull*, 48 Vt. 302; *Briggs v. Hubbard*, 19 Vt. 86; *Hastings v. Lane*, 15 Me. 134; *Torrey v. Corliss*, 32 Me. 333; *Atkinson v. Dunlop*, 50 Me. 111; *Rogers v. Greenbush*, 58 Me.

just and wise to forbid such laws altogether by their constitutions.¹

[* 371] * A retrospective statute curing defects in legal proceedings where they are in their nature irregularities only, and do not extend to matters of jurisdiction, is not void on constitutional grounds, unless expressly forbidden. Of this class are the statutes to cure irregularities in the assessment of property

895; *Guard v. Rowan*, 3 Ill. 499; *Garrett v. Doe*, 2 Ill. 335; *Thompson v. Alexander*, 11 Ill. 54; *Conway v. Cable*, 37 Ill. 82; *In re Tuller*, 79 Ill. 99; *Knight v. Begole*, 56 Ill. 122; *McHaney v. Trustees of Schools*, 68 Ill. 140; *Hatcher v. Toledo, &c. R. R. Co.*, 62 Ill. 477; *Harrison v. Metz*, 17 Mich. 377; *Danville v. Pace*, 25 Grat. 1; *Cumberland, &c. R. R. Co. v. Washington Co. Court*, 10 Bush, 564; *State v. Barbee*, 8 Ind. 258; *State v. Atwood*, 11 Wis. 422; *Bartruff v. Remey*, 15 Iowa, 257; *Knoulton v. Redenbaugh*, 40 Iowa, 114; *Allbyer v. State*, 10 Ohio, n. s. 588; *Colony v. Dublin*, 32 N. H. 432; *Ex parte Graham*, 13 Rich. 277; *Garrett v. Beaumont*, 24 Miss. 377; *Clark v. Baltimore*, 29 Md. 277; *Williams v. Johnson*, 30 Md. 500; *State v. The Auditor*, 41 Mo. 25; *State v. Ferguson*, 62 Mo. 77; *Merwin v. Ballard*, 66 N. C. 398; *Tyson v. School Directors*, 51 Penn. St. 9; *Haley v. Philadelphia*, 68 Penn. St. 45; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 153; *Baldwin v. Newark*, 38 N. J. 138. This doctrine applies to amendments of statutes. *Ely v. Holton*, 15 N. Y. 595.

¹ See the provision in the Constitution of New Hampshire, considered in *Woart v. Winnick*, 3 N. H. 481; *Clark v. Clark*, 10 N. H. 386; *Willard v. Harvey*, 24 N. H. 351; *Rich v. Flanders*, 39 N. H. 304; and *Simpson v. Savings Bank*, 56 N. H. 466; and that in the Constitution of Texas, in *De Cordova v. Galveston*, 4 Tex. 470. The Constitution of Ohio provides that "the General Assembly shall have no power to pass retroac-

tive laws, or laws impairing the obligation of contracts; provided, however, that the General Assembly may, by general laws, authorize the courts to carry into effect the manifest intention of parties and officers, by curing omissions, defects, and errors in instruments and proceedings, arising out of their want of conformity with the laws of this State, and upon such terms as shall be just and equitable." Under this clause it was held competent for the General Assembly to pass an act authorizing the courts to correct mistakes in deeds of married women previously executed, whereby they were rendered ineffectual. *Goshorn v. Purcell*, 11 Ohio, n. s. 641. Under a provision in the Constitution of Tennessee that no retrospective law shall be passed, it has been held that a law authorizing a bill to be filed by slaves, by their next friend, to emancipate them, although it applied to cases which arose before its passage, was not a retrospective law within the meaning of this clause. *Fisher's Negroes v. Dobbs*, 6 Yerg. 119. An act for the payment of bounties for past services was held not retrospective in *State v. Richland*, 20 Ohio, n. s. 369. See further, *Society v. Wheeler*, 2 Gall. 105; *Officer v. Young*, 5 Yerg. 320: Legislation may be ordered to take immediate effect notwithstanding retrospective laws are forbidden. *Thomas v. Scott*, 23 La. Ann. 689.

That the legislature cannot retrospectively construe statutes and bind parties thereby, see *ante*, p. *93 *et seq.*

for taxation and the levy of taxes thereon ;¹ irregularities in the organization or elections of corporations ;² irregularities in the votes or other action by municipal corporations, or the like, where a statutory power has failed of due and regular execution through the carelessness of officers, or other cause ;³ irregular proceedings in courts, &c.⁴

The rule applicable to cases of this description is substantially the following : If the thing wanting, or which failed to be done, and which constitutes the defect in the proceedings, is something the necessity for which the legislature might have dispensed with by prior statute, then it is not beyond the power of the legislature to dispense with it by subsequent statute. And if the irregularity consists in doing some act, or in the mode or manner of doing some act which the legislature might have made immaterial by prior law, it is equally competent to make the same immaterial by a subsequent law.

A few of the decided cases will illustrate this principle. In *Kearney v. Taylor*⁵ a sale of real estate belonging to infant tenants in common had been made by order of court in a parti-

¹ *Butler v. Toledo*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 225; *Strauch v. Shoemaker*, 1 W. & S. 175; *McCoy v. Michew*, 7 W. & S. 390; *Montgomery v. Meredith*, 17 Penn. St. 42; *Dunden v. Snodgrass*, 18 Penn. St. 151; *Williston v. Colkett*, 9 Penn. St. 38; *Boardman v. Beckwith*, 18 Iowa, 292; *The Iowa R. R. Land Co. v. Soper*, 39 Iowa, 112; *Lennon v. New York*, 55 N. Y. 361. It is not unconstitutional to prohibit the vacating of assessments for irregularities. *Astor v. New York*, 62 N. Y. 580. The limit of power in validating assessments is very clearly shown by *McKinstry, J.*, in *People v. Lynch*, 51 Cal. 15. And see *Walter v. Bacon*, 8 Mass. 472; *Locke v. Dane*, 9 Mass. 360; *Patterson v. Philbrook*, 9 Mass. 153; *Trustees v. McCaughy*, 2 Ohio, n. s. 152. The right to provide for a reassessment of taxes irregularly levied is undoubted. See *Brevoot v. Detroit*, 23 Mich. 322; *State v. Newark*, 34 N. J. 237; *Muselman v. Logansport*, 29 Ind. 533.

But, of course, if the vice is in the nature of the tax itself, it will continue and be fatal, however often the process of assessment may be repeated. See *post*, p. *382.

² *Syracuse Bank v. Davis*, 16 Barb. 188; *Mitchell v. Deeds*, 49 Ill. 416.

³ See *Menges v. Wertman*, 1 Penn. St. 218; *Yost's Report*, 17 Penn. St. 524; *Bennett v. Fisher*, 26 Iowa, 497; *Allen v. Archer*, 49 Me. 346; *Commonwealth v. Marshall*, 69 Penn. St. 328; *State v. Union*, 33 N. J. 250; *State v. Guttenberg*, 38 N. J. 419. By the Constitution of Missouri, the legislature is forbidden to legalize the unauthorized or invalid acts of any officer or agent of the State, or of any county or municipality. Art. 4, § 53.

⁴ *Lane v. Nelson*, 79 Penn. St. 407; *Tilton v. Swift*, 40 Iowa, 78; *Supervisors v. Wisconsin Cent. R. R. Co.*, 121 Mass. 460.

⁵ 15 How. 494. And see *Boyce v. Sinclair*, 3 Bush, 261; *Weed v. Donovan*, 114 Mass. 181.

tion suit, and the land bid off by a company of persons, who proposed subdividing and selling it in parcels. The sale was confirmed in their names, but by mutual arrangement the deed was made to one only, for convenience in selling and conveying. This deed failed to convey the title, because not following the sale. The legislature afterwards passed an act providing that, on proof being made to the satisfaction of the court or jury before which such deed was offered in evidence that the land [* 372] was sold fairly and without fraud, * and the deed executed in good faith and for a sufficient consideration, and with the consent of the persons reported as purchasers, the deed should have the same effect as though it had been made to the purchasers. That this act was unobjectionable in principle was not denied; and it cannot be doubted that a prior statute, authorizing the deed to be made to one for the benefit of all and with their assent, would have been open to no valid objection.¹

In certain Connecticut cases it was insisted that sales made of real estate on execution were void, because the officer had included in the amount due, several small items of fees not allowed by law. It appeared, however, that, after the sales were made, the legislature had passed an act providing that no levy should be deemed void by reason of the officer having included greater fees than were by law allowable, but that all such levies, not in other respects defective, should be valid and effectual to transmit the title of the real estate levied upon. The liability of the officer for receiving more than his legal fees was at the same time left unaffected. In the leading case the court say: "The law, undoubtedly, is retrospective; but is it unjust? All the charges of the officer on the execution in question are perfectly reasonable, and for necessary services in the performance of his duty; of consequence they are eminently just, and so is the act confirming the levies. A law, although it be retrospective, if conformable to entire justice, this court has repeatedly decided is to be recognized and enforced."²

¹ See *Davis v. State Bank*, 7 Ind. 316, and *Lucas v. Tucker*, 17 Ind. 41, for decisions under statutes curing irregular sales by guardians and executors. In many of the States general laws will be found providing that such sales shall not be defeated

by certain specified defects and irregularities.

² *Beach v. Walker*, 6 Conn. 197; *Booth v. Booth*, 7 Conn. 350. And see *Mather v. Chapman*, 6 Conn. 54; *Norton v. Pettibone*, 7 Conn. 319; *Welch v. Wadsworth*, 30 Conn. 149;

In another Connecticut case it appeared that certain marriages had been celebrated by persons in the ministry who were not empowered to perform that ceremony by the State law, and that the marriages were therefore invalid. The legislature had afterwards passed an act declaring all such marriages valid, and the court sustained the act. It was assailed as an exercise of the judicial power; but this it clearly was not, as it purported to settle no controversies, and merely sought to give effect to the desire of the parties, which they had ineffectually attempted to carry out by means of the ceremony which proved insufficient. And while it was not claimed that the act was void in so far as it made effectual the legal relation * of matrimony between [* 373] the parties, it was nevertheless insisted that rights of property dependent upon that relation could not be affected by it, inasmuch as, in order to give such rights, it must operate retrospectively. The court in disposing of the case are understood to express the opinion that, if the legislature possesses the power to validate an imperfect marriage, still more clearly does it have power to affect incidental rights. "The man and the woman were unmarried, notwithstanding the formal ceremony which passed between them, and free in point of law to live in celibacy, or contract marriage with any other persons at pleasure. It is a strong exercise of power to compel two persons to marry without their consent, and a palpable perversion of strict legal right. At the same time the retrospective law thus far directly operating on vested rights is admitted to be unquestionably valid, because manifestly just."¹

It is not to be inferred from this language that the court understood the legislature to possess power to select individual members of the community, and force them into a relation of marriage with each other against their will. That complete control which the legislature is supposed to possess over the domestic

Smith v. Merchand's Ex'rs, 7 S. & R. 260; Underwood v. Lilly, 10 S. & R. 97; Bleakney v. Bank of Greencastle, 17 S. & R. 64; Menges v. Wertman, 1 Penn. St. 218; Weister v. Hade, 52 Penn. St. 474; Ahl v. Gleim, 52 Penn. St. 432; Selsby v. Redlon, 19 Wis. 17; Parmelee v. Lawrence, 48 Ill. 331.

¹ Goshen v. Stonington, 4 Conn. 224, per Hosmer, J. The power to validate void marriages held not to exist in the legislature where, by the constitution, the whole subject was referred to the courts. White v. White, 105 Mass. 325.

relations can hardly extend so far. The legislature may perhaps divorce parties, with or without cause, according to its own view of justice or public policy; but for the legislature to marry parties against their consent, we conceive to be decidedly against "the law of the land." The learned court must be understood as speaking here with exclusive reference to the case at bar, in which the legislature, by the retrospective act, were merely removing a formal defect in certain marriages which the parties had assented to, and which they had attempted to form. Such an act, unless special circumstances conspired to make it otherwise, would certainly be "manifestly just," and therefore might well be held "unquestionably valid." And if the marriage was rendered valid, the legal incidents would follow of course. In a Pennsylvania case the validity of certain grading and paving assessments was involved, and it was argued that they were invalid for the reason that the city ordinance under which they had been made was inoperative, because not recorded as required by law. But the legislature had passed an act to validate this ordinance, and had declared therein that the omission to record the ordinance should not affect or impair the lien of the assessments against the lot owners. In passing upon the validity of this act, the court express the following views: "Whenever there is a right, though imperfect, the constitution does not prohibit the legislature from giving a remedy. In *Hepburn v. Curtis*,¹ it was said, 'The legislature, provided it does not violate the constitutional provisions, may pass retrospective laws, *such as in their operation may affect suits pending, and give to a party a remedy which he did not previously possess, or modify an existing remedy, or remove an impediment in the way of legal proceedings.' What more has been done in this case? . . . While (the ordinance) was in force, contracts to do the work were made in pursuance of it, and the liability of the city was incurred. But it was suffered to become of no effect by the failure to record it. Notwithstanding this, the grading and paving were done, and the lots of the defendants received the benefit at the public expense. Now can the omission to record the ordinance diminish the equitable right of the public to reimbursement? It is at most but a formal defect in the remedy provided, — an oversight. That

¹ 7 Watts, 300.

such defects may be cured by retroactive legislation need not be argued.”¹

On the same principle legislative acts validating invalid contracts have been sustained. When these acts go no farther than to bind a party by a contract which he has attempted to enter into, but which was invalid by reason of some personal inability on his part to make it, or through neglect of some legal formality, or in consequence of some ingredient in the contract forbidden by law, the question which they suggest is one of policy, and not of constitutional power.

By statute of Ohio, all bonds, notes, bills, or contracts negotiable or payable at any unauthorized bank, or made for the purpose of being discounted at any such bank, were declared to be void. While this statute was in force a note was made for the purpose of being discounted at one of these institutions, and was actually discounted by it. Afterwards the legislature passed an act, reciting that many persons were indebted to such bank, by bonds, bills, notes, &c., and that owing, among other things, to doubts of its right to recover its debts, it was unable to meet its own obligations, and had ceased business, and for the purpose of winding up its affairs had made an assignment to a trustee; therefore the said act authorized the said trustee to bring suits on the said bonds, bills, notes, &c., and declared it should not be lawful for the defendants in such suits “to plead, set up, or insist upon, in defence, that the notes, bonds, bills, or other written evidences of such indebtedness are void on account of being contracts against or in violation of any statute *law [* 375] of this State, or on account of their being contrary to public policy.” This law was sustained as a law “that contracts may be enforced,” and as in furtherance of equity and good morals.² The original invalidity was only because of the statute, and that statute was founded upon reasons of public policy which had either ceased to be of force, or which the legislature regarded as overborne by countervailing reasons. Under these circumstances

¹ *Schenley v. Commonwealth*, 36 Penn. St. 29, 57. See also *State v. Newark*, 27 N. J. 185; *Den v. Downam*, 13 N. J. 135; *People v. Seymour*, 16 Cal. 332; *Grim v. Weisenburg School District*, 57 Penn. St. 433; *State v. Union*, 33 N. J. 355.

The legislature has the same power to ratify and confirm an illegally appointed corporate body that it has to create a new one. *Mitchell v. Deeds*, 49 Ill. 416.

² *Lewis v. McElvain*, 16 Ohio, 347.

it was reasonable and just that the makers of such paper should be precluded from relying upon such invalidity.¹

By a statute of Connecticut, where loans of money were made, and a bonus was paid by the borrower over and beyond the interest and bonus permitted by law, the demand was subject to a deduction from the principal of all the interest and bonus paid. A construction appears to have been put upon this statute by business men which was different from that afterwards given by the courts; and a large number of contracts of loan were in consequence subject to the deduction. The legislature then passed a "healing act," which provided that such loans theretofore made should not be held, by reason of the taking of such bonus, to be usurious, illegal, or in any respect void; but that, if otherwise legal, they were thereby confirmed, and declared to be [* 376] valid, as to principal, interest, and *bonus. The case of *Goshen v. Stonington*² was regarded as sufficient authority in support of this act; and the principle to be derived

¹ *Trustees v. McCaughy*, 2 Ohio, N. S. 155; *Johnson v. Bentley*, 16 Ohio, 97. See also *Syracuse Bank v. Davis*, 16 Barb. 188. By statute, notes issued by unincorporated banking associations were declared void. This statute was afterwards repealed, and action was brought against bankers on notes previously issued. Objection being taken that the legislature could not validate the void contracts, the judge says: "I will consider this case on the broad ground of the contract having been void when made, and of no new contract having arisen since the repealing act. But by rendering the contract void it was not annihilated. The object of the [original] act was not to vest any right in any unlawful banking association, but directly the reverse. The motive was not to create a privilege, or shield them from the payment of their just debts, but to restrain them from violating the law by destroying the credit of their paper, and punishing those who received it. How then can the defendants complain? As unauthorized bankers they were violators of

the law, and objects not of protection but of punishment. The repealing act was a statutory pardon of the crime committed by the receivers of this illegal medium. Might not the legislature pardon the crime, without consulting those who committed it? . . . How can the defendants say there was no contract, when the plaintiff produces their written engagement for the performance of a duty, binding in conscience if not in law? Although the contract, for reasons of policy, was so far void that an action could not be sustained on it, yet a moral obligation to perform it, whenever those reasons ceased, remained; and it would be going very far to say that the legislature may not add a legal sanction to that obligation, on account of some fancied constitutional restriction." *Hess v. Werts*, 4 S. & R. 361. See also *Bleakney v. Bank of Greencastle*, 17 S. & R. 64; *Menges v. Wertman*, 1 Penn. St. 218; *Boyce v. Sinclair*, 3 Bush, 264.

² 4 Conn. 224. See *ante*, pp. *372-*373.

from that case was stated to be "that where a statute is expressly retroactive, and the object and effect of it is to correct an innocent mistake, remedy a mischief, execute the intention of the parties, and promote justice, then, both as a matter of right and of public policy affecting the peace and welfare of the community, the law should be sustained."¹

After the courts of the State of Pennsylvania had decided that the relation of landlord and tenant could not exist in that State under a Connecticut title, a statute was passed which provided that the relation of landlord and tenant "shall exist and be held as fully and effectually between Connecticut settlers and Pennsylvania claimants as between other citizens of this Commonwealth, on the trial of any case now pending or hereafter to be brought within this Commonwealth, any law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding." In a suit which was pending and had been once tried before the statute was passed, the statute was sustained by the Supreme Court of that State, and afterwards by the Supreme Court of the United States, into which last-mentioned court it had been removed on the allegation that it violated the obligation of contracts. As its purpose and effect was to remove from contracts which the parties had made a legal impediment to their enforcement, there would seem to be no doubt, in the light of the other authorities we have referred to, that the conclusion reached was the only just and proper one.²

In the State of Ohio, certain deeds made by married women were ineffectual for the purposes of record and evidence, by reason of the omission on the part of the officer taking the acknowledgment to state in his certificate that, before and at the time of the

¹ *Savings Bank v. Allen*, 28 Conn. 97. See also *Savings Bank v. Bates*, 8 Conn. 505; *Andrews v. Russell*, 7 Blackf. 474; *Grimes v. Doe*, 8 Blackf. 371; *Thompson v. Morgan*, 6 Minn. 292; *Parmelee v. Lawrence*, 48 Ill. 331. In *Curtis v. Leavitt*, 17 Barb. 309, and 15 N. Y. 9, and in *Woodruff v. Scruggs*, 27 Ark. 26, s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 777, a statute forbidding the interposition of the defence of usury was treated as a statute repealing a penalty. See further, *Lewis v. Foster*, 1 N. H. 61; *Wilson v. Hardesty*, 1 Md. Ch. 66;

Welch v. Wadsworth, 30 Conn. 149; *Wood v. Kennedy*, 19 Ind. 68; *Washburn v. Franklin*, 35 Barb. 599; *Parmelee v. Lawrence*, 48 Ill. 331; *Danville v. Pace*, 25 Grat 1. The case of *Gilliland v. Phillips*, 1 S. C. n. s. 152, is *contra*; but it discusses the point but little, and makes no reference to these cases.

² *Satterlee v. Mathewson*, 16 S. & R. 169, and 2 Pet. 380. And see *Watson v. Mercer*, 8 Pet. 88; *Lessee of Dulany v. Tilghman*, 6 G. & J. 461; *Payne v. Treadwell*, 16 Cal. 220; *Maxey v. Wise*, 25 Ind. 1.

grantor making the acknowledgment, he made the contents known to her by reading or otherwise. An act was afterwards passed which provided that "any deed heretofore executed pursuant to * law, by husband and wife, shall be received in evidence in any of the courts of this State, as conveying the estate of the wife, although the magistrate taking the acknowledgment of such deed shall not have certified that he read or made known the contents of such deed before or at the time she acknowledged the execution thereof." This statute, though with some hesitation at first, was held to be unobjectionable. The deeds with the defective acknowledgments were regarded by the legislature and by the court as being sufficient for the purpose of conveying at least the grantor's equitable estate; and if sufficient for this purpose, no vested rights would be disturbed, or wrong be done, by making them receivable in evidence as conveyances.¹

Other cases go much farther than this, and hold that, although the deed was originally ineffectual for the purpose of conveying the title, the healing statute may accomplish the intent of the parties by giving it effect.² At first sight these cases might seem

¹ *Chestnut v. Shane's Lessee*, 16 Ohio, 599, overruling *Connell v. Connell*, 6 Ohio, 358; *Good v. Zercher*, 12 Ohio, 364; *Meddock v. Williams*, 12 Ohio, 377; and *Silliman v. Cummins*, 13 Ohio, 116. Of the dissenting opinion in the last case, which the court approve in 16 Ohio, 609-610, they say: "That opinion stands upon the ground that the act operates only upon that class of deeds where enough had been done to show that a court of chancery ought, in each case, to render a decree for a conveyance, assuming that the certificate was not such as the law required. And where the title in equity was such that a court of chancery ought to interfere and decree a good legal title, it was within the power of the legislature to confirm the deed, without subjecting an indefinite number to the useless expense of unnecessary litigation." See also *Lessee of Dulany v. Tilghman*, 6 G. & J. 461; *Journey v. Gibson*, 56 Penn. St. 57; *Grove v.*

Todd, 41 Md. 633. But the legislature, it has been declared, has no power to legalize and make valid the deed of an insane person. *Routson v. Wolf*, 35 Mo. 174. In Illinois it has been decided that a deed of release of dower executed by a married woman, but not so acknowledged as to be effectual, cannot be validated by retrospective statute, because to do so would be to take from the woman a vested right. *Russell v. Rumsey*, 35 Ill. 362.

² *Lessee of Walton v. Bailey*, 1 Binn. 477; *Underwood v. Lilly*, 10 S. & R. 101; *Barnet v. Barnet*, 15 S. & R. 72; *Tate v. Stooltzfoos*, 16 S. & R. 35; *Watson v. Mercer*, 8 Pet. 88; *Carpenter v. Pennsylvania*, 17 How. 456; *Davis v. State Bank*, 7 Ind. 316; *Dentzel v. Waldie*, 30 Cal. 138; *Estate of Sticknoth*, 7 Nev. 227; *Goshorn v. Purcell*, 11 Ohio, N. S. 641. In the last case the court say: "The act of the married woman may, under the law, have been void and inopera-

to go beyond the mere confirmation of a contract, and to be at least technically objectionable, as depriving a party of property * without an opportunity for trial, inasmuch as [* 378] they proceeded upon the assumption that the title still remained in the grantor, and that the healing act was required for the purpose of divesting him of it, and passing it over to the grantee.¹ Apparently, therefore, there would seem to be some force to the objection that such a statute deprives a party of vested rights. But the objection is more specious than sound. If all that is wanting to a valid contract or conveyance is the observance of some legal formality, the party may have a legal right to avoid it: but this right is coupled with no equity, even though the case be such that no remedy could be afforded the other party in the courts. The right which the healing act takes away in such a case is *the right in the party to avoid his contract*, — a naked legal right which it is usually unjust to insist upon, and which no constitutional provision was ever designed to protect.² As the point is put by Chief Justice *Parker* of Massachusetts, a party cannot have a vested right to do wrong;³ or, as stated by the Supreme Court of New Jersey, “Laws curing defects which would otherwise operate to frustrate what must be presumed to be the desire of the party affected, cannot be considered as taking

tive; but in justice and equity it did not leave her right to the property untouched. She had capacity to do the act in a form prescribed by law for her protection. She intended to do the act in the prescribed form. She attempted to do it, and her attempt was received and acted on in good faith. A mistake subsequently discovered invalidates the act; justice and equity require that she should not take advantage of the mistake; and she has therefore no just right to the property. She has no right to complain if the law which prescribed forms for her protection shall interfere to prevent her reliance upon them to resist the demands of justice.” Similar language is employed in the Pennsylvania cases. See further, *Dentzel v. Waldie*, 30 Cal. 138.

¹ This view has been taken in some similar cases. See *Russell v.*

Rumsey, 35 Ill. 362; *Alabama, &c. Ins. Co. v. Boykin*, 38 Ala. 510; *Orton v. Noonan*, 23 Wis. 102; *Dade v. Medcalf*, 9 Penn. St. 108.

² In *Gibson v. Hibbard*, 13 Mich. 215, a check, void at the time it was given, for want of a revenue stamp, was held valid after being stamped as permitted by a subsequent act of Congress. A similar ruling was made in *Harris v. Rutledge*, 19 Iowa, 389. The case of *State v. Norwood*, 12 Md. 195, is still stronger. The curative statute was passed after judgment had been rendered against the right claimed under the defective instrument, and it was held that it must be applied by the appellate court. See *post*, p. *381.

³ *Foster v. Essex Bank*, 16 Mass. 245. See also *Lycoming v. Union*, 15 Penn. 166, 170.

away vested rights. Courts do not regard rights as vested contrary to the justice and equity of the case."¹

The operation of these cases, however, must be carefully restricted to the parties to the original contract, and to such other persons as may have succeeded to their rights with no greater equities. A subsequent *bona fide* purchaser cannot be deprived of the property which he has acquired, by an act which retrospectively deprives his grantor of the title which he had when the purchase was made. Conceding that the invalid deed may be made good as between the parties, yet if, while it remained invalid, and the grantor still retained the legal title to the land,

a third person has purchased and received a conveyance, [* 379] with no notice of any fact which should * preclude his acquiring an equitable as well as a legal title thereby, it would not be in the power of the legislature to so confirm the original deed as to divest him of the title he has acquired. The position of the case is altogether changed by this purchase. The legal title is no longer separated from equities, but in the hands of the second purchaser is united with an equity as strong as that which exists in favor of him who purchased first. Under such circumstances even the courts of equity must recognize the right of the second purchaser as best, and as entitled to the usual protection which the law accords to vested interests.²

¹ *State v. Newark*, 25 N. J. 197. Compare *Blount v. Janesville*, 31 Wis. 648; *Brown v. New York*, 63 N. Y. 239. In *New York, &c. R. R. Co. v. Van Horn*, 57 N. Y. 473, the right of the legislature to validate a void contract was denied on the ground that to validate it would be to take the property of the contracting party without due process of law. The cases which are *contra* are not examined in the opinion, or even referred to.

² *Brinton v. SeEVERS*, 12 Iowa, 389; *Southard v. Central R. R. Co.*, 26 N. J. 22; *Thompson v. Morgan*, 6 Minn. 292; *Meighen v. Strong*, 6 Minn. 177; *Norman v. Heist*, 5 W. & S. 171; *Greenough v. Greenough*, 11 Penn. St. 494; *Le Bois v. Bramel*, 4 How. 449; *McCarthy v. Hoffman*, 23 Penn. St. 508; *Sherwood v. Flem-*

ing, 25 Tex. 408; *Wright v. Hawkins*, 28 Tex. 452. The legislature cannot validate an invalid trust in a will, by act passed after the death of the testator, and after title vested in the heirs. *Hilliard v. Miller*, 10 Penn. St. 338. See *Snyder v. Bull*, 17 Penn. St. 58; *McCarthy v. Hoffman*, 23 Penn. St. 507; *Bolton v. Johns*, 5 Penn. St. 145; *State v. Warren*, 28 Md. 338. The cases here cited must not be understood as establishing any different principle from that laid down in *Goshen v. Stonington*, 4 Conn. 209, where it was held competent to validate a marriage, notwithstanding the rights of third parties would be incidentally affected. Rights of third parties are liable to be incidentally affected more or less in any case in which a defective contract is made good; but

If, however, a grantor undertakes to convey more than he possesses, or contrary to the conditions or qualifications which, for the benefit of others, are imposed upon his title, or in fraud of the rights of others whose representative or agent he is, so that the defect in his conveyance consists not in any want of due formality, nor in any disability imposed by law, it is not in the power of the legislature to validate it retrospectively; and we may add, also, that it would not have been competent to authorize it in advance. In such case the rights of others intervene, and they are entitled to protection on the same grounds, though for still stronger reasons, which exist in the case of the *bona fide* purchasers above referred to.¹

this is no more than might happen in enforcing a contract or decreeing a divorce. See *post*, p. *384. Also *Tallman v. Janesville*, 17 Wis. 71.

¹ In *Shouk v. Brown*, 61 Penn. St. 327, the facts were that a married woman held property under a devise, with an express restraint upon her power to alienate. She nevertheless gave a deed of the same, and a legislative act was afterwards obtained to validate this deed. Held void. *Agnew, J.*: "Many cases have been cited to prove that this legislation is merely confirmatory and valid, beginning with *Barnet v. Barnet*, 15 S. & R. 72, and ending with *Journey v. Gibson*, 56 Penn. St. 57. The most of them are cases of the defective acknowledgments of deeds of married women. But there is a marked difference between them and this. In all of them there was a power to convey, and only a defect in the mode of its exercise. Here there is an absolute want of power to convey in any mode. In ordinary cases a married woman has both the title and the power to convey or to mortgage her estate, but is restricted merely in the manner of its exercise. This is a restriction it is competent for the legislature to remove, for the defect arises merely in the form of the proceeding, and not in any want of authority. Those

to whom her estate descends, because of the omission of a prescribed form, are really not injured by the validation. It was in her power to cut them off, and in truth and conscience she did so, though she failed at law. They cannot complain, therefore, that the legislature interferes to do justice. But the case before us is different. [The grantor] had neither the right nor the power during coverture to cut off her heirs. She was forbidden by the law of the gift, which the donor imposed upon it to suit his own purposes. Her title was qualified to this extent. Having done an act she had no right to do, there was no moral obligation for the legislature to enforce. Her heirs have a right to say . . . 'the legislature cannot take our estate and vest it in another who bought it with notice on the face of his title that our mother could not convey to him.' The true principle on which retrospective laws are supported was stated long ago by *Duncan, J.*, in *Underwood v. Lilly*, 10 S. & R. 101; to wit, where they impair no contract, or disturb no vested right, but only vary remedies, cure defects in proceedings otherwise fair, which do not vary existing obligations contrary to their situation when entered into and when prosecuted." In *White Mountains R. R. Co. v. White Mountains R. R.*

We have already referred to the case of contracts by municipal corporations which, when made, were in excess of their authority, but subsequently have been confirmed by legislative action. If the contract is one which the legislature might originally have authorized, the case falls within the principle above laid down, and the right of the legislature to confirm it must be recognized.¹ This principle is one which has very often been acted upon in the case of municipal subscriptions to works of internal improvement, where the original undertaking was without authority of law, and the authority given was conferred by statute retrospectively.²

It has not usually been regarded as a circumstance of importance in these cases, whether the enabling act was before or after the corporation had entered into the contract in question; and if the legislature possesses that complete control over the subject of taxation by municipal corporations which has been declared in

Co. of N. H., 50 N. H. 50, it was decided that the legislature had no power, as against non-assenting parties, to validate a fraudulent sale of corporate property. In *Alter's Appeal*, 67 Penn. St. 341, a. c. 5 Am. Rep. 433, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania declared it incompetent for the legislature, after the death of a party, to empower the courts to correct a mistake in his will which rendered it inoperative — the title having already passed to his heirs. But where it was not known that the decedent left heirs, it was held competent, as against the State, to cure defects in a will after the death, and thus prevent an escheat. *Estate of Sticknoth*, 7 Nev. 229.

¹ See *Shaw v. Norfolk R. R. Corp.*, 5 Gray, 179, in which it was held that the legislature might validate an unauthorized assignment of a franchise. Also *May v. Holdridge*, 23 Wis. 93, and cases cited, in which statutes authorizing the reassessment of irregular taxes were sustained. In this case, *Paine, J.*, says: "This rule must of course be understood with its proper restrictions. The work for which the tax is sought to be assessed

must be of such a character that the legislature is authorized to provide for it by taxation. The method adopted must be one liable to no constitutional objection. It must be such as the legislature might originally have authorized had it seen fit. With these restrictions, where work of this character has been done, I think it competent for the legislature to supply a defect of authority in the original proceedings, to adopt and ratify the improvement and provide for a reassessment of the tax to pay for it." And see *Brewster v. Syracuse*, 19 N. Y. 116; *Kunkle v. Franklin*, 13 Minn. 127; *Boyce v. Sinclair*, 3 Bush, 264; *Dean v. Borchsenius*, 30 Wis. 236; *Stuart v. Warren*, 37 Conn. 225. A city ordinance may be validated retrospectively. *Truchelut v. Charleston*, 1 N. & McC. 227.

² See, among other cases, *McMillan v. Boyles*, 6 Iowa, 330; *Gould v. Sterling*, 23 N. Y. 457; *Thompson v. Lee County*, 3 Wall. 327; *Bridgeport v. Housatonic R. R. Co.*, 15 Conn. 475; *Board of Commissioners v. Bright*, 18 Ind. 93; *Gibbons v. Mobile, &c. R. R. Co.*, 36 Ala. 410.

many cases, it is difficult to perceive how such a corporation can successfully contest the validity of a special statute, which only sanctions a contract previously made by the *cor- [* 380] poration, and which, though at the time *ultra vires*, was nevertheless for a public and local object, and compels its performance through an exercise of the power of taxation.¹

¹ In *Hasbrouck v. Milwaukee*, 13 Wis. 37, it appeared that the city of Milwaukee had been authorized to contract for the construction of a harbor, at an expense not to exceed \$100,000. A contract was entered into by the city providing for a larger expenditure; and a special legislative act was afterwards obtained to ratify it. The court held that the subsequent legislative ratification was not sufficient, *proprio vigore*, and without evidence that such ratification was procured with the assent of the city, or had been subsequently acted upon or confirmed by it, to make the contract obligatory upon the city. The court say, per *Dixon*, Ch. J.: "The question is, can the legislature, by recognizing the existence of a previously void contract, and authorizing its discharge by the city, or in any other way, coerce the city against its will into a performance of it, or does the law require the assent of the city, as well as of the legislature, in order to make the obligation binding and efficacious? I must say that, in my opinion, the latter act, as well as the former, is necessary for that purpose, and that without it the obligation cannot be enforced. A contract void for want of capacity in one or both of the contracting parties to enter into it is as no contract; it is as if no attempt at an agreement had ever been made. And to admit that the legislature, of its own choice, and against the wishes of either or both of the contracting parties, can give it life and vigor, is to admit that it is within the scope of legislative authority to divest settled rights of property, and to take the

property of one individual or corporation and transfer it to another." This reasoning is of course to be understood in the light of the particular case before the court; that is to say, a case in which the contract was to do something not within the ordinary functions of local government. See the case explained and defended by the same eminent judge in *Mills v. Charlton*, 29 Wis. 413. Compare *Fisk v. Kenosha*, 26 Wis. 26, 33, *Knapp v. Grant*, 27 Wis. 147, and *Single v. Supervisors of Marathon*, 38 Wis. 363, in which the right to validate a contract which might originally have been authorized was fully affirmed. And see *Marshall v. Silliman*, 61 Ill. 218, 225, opinion by Chief Justice *Lawrence*, in which, after referring to *Harward v. St. Clair, &c. Drainage Co.*, 51 Ill. 130, *People v. Mayor of Chicago*, 51 Ill. 30, *Hessler v. Drainage Com'rs*, 53 Ill. 105, and *Lovington v. Wider*, 53 Ill. 302, it is said, "These cases show it to be the settled doctrine of this court, that, under the constitution of 1848, the legislature could not compel a municipal corporation to incur a debt for merely local purposes, against its own wishes, and this doctrine, as already remarked, has received the sanction of express enactment in our existing constitution. That was the effect of the curative act under consideration, and it was therefore void." The cases of *Guilford v. Supervisors of Chenango*, 18 Barb. 615, and 13 N. Y. 143, *Brewster v. Syracuse*, 19 N. Y. 116, and *Thomas v. Leland*, 24 Wend. 65, especially go much further than is necessary to sustain the text. See also

[*381] *Nor is it important in any of the cases to which we have referred, that the legislative act which cures the irregularity, defect, or want of original authority, was passed after suit brought, in which such irregularity or defect became matter of importance. The bringing of suit vests in a party no right to a particular decision;¹ and his case must be determined on the law as it stands, not when the suit was brought, but when the judgment is rendered.² It has been held that a statute allowing

Bartholomew v. Harwinton, 38 Conn. 408; *People v. Mitchell*, 35 N. Y. 551; *Barbour v. Camden*, 51 Me. 608; *Weister v. Hade*, 52 Penn. St. 474; *State v. Sullivan*, 43 Ill. 413; *Johnson v. Campbell*, 49 Ill. 316. In *Brewster v. Syracuse*, parties had constructed a sewer for the city at a stipulated price, which had been fully paid to them. The charter of the city forbade the payment of extra compensation to contractors in any case. The legislature afterwards passed an act empowering the Common Council of Syracuse to assess, collect, and pay over the further sum of \$600 in addition to the contract price; and this act was held constitutional. In *Thomas v. Leland*, certain parties had given bond to the State, conditioned to pay into the treasury a certain sum of money as an inducement to the State to connect the Chenango Canal with the Erie at Utica, instead of at Whitestown as originally contemplated,—the sum mentioned being the increased expense in consequence of the change. Afterwards the legislature, deeming the debt thus contracted by individuals unreasonably partial and onerous, passed an act, the object of which was to levy the amount on the owners of real estate in Utica. This act seemed to the court unobjectionable. “The general purpose of raising the money by tax was to construct a canal, a public highway, which the legislature believed would be a benefit to the city of Utica as such; and independently

of the bond, the case is the ordinary one of local taxation to make or improve a highway. If such an act be otherwise constitutional, we do not see how the circumstance that a bond had before been given securing the same money can detract from its validity. Should an individual volunteer to secure a sum of money, in itself properly leviable by way of tax on a town or county, there would be nothing in the nature of such an arrangement which would preclude the legislature from resorting, by way of tax, to those who are primarily and more justly liable. Even should he pay the money, what is there in the constitution to preclude his being reimbursed by a tax.” Here, it will be perceived, the corporation was compelled to assume an obligation which it had not even attempted to incur, but which private persons, for considerations which seemed to them sufficient, had taken upon their own shoulders. We have expressed doubts of the correctness of this decision, *ante*, pp. *230–*231, note, where a number of cases are cited, bearing upon the point.

¹ *Bacon v. Callender*, 6 Mass. 309; *Butler v. Palmer*, 1 Hill, 324; *Cowgill v. Long*, 15 Ill. 203; *Miller v. Graham*, 17 Ohio, n. s. 1; *State v. Squires*, 26 Iowa, 340; *Patterson v. Philbrook*, 9 Mass. 151.

² *Watson v. Mercer*, 8 Pet. 88; *Mather v. Chapman*, 6 Conn. 54; *Bristol v. Supervisors, &c.*, 20 Mich. 93; *Satterlee v. Mathewson*, 16 S. & R. 169, and 2 Pet. 380.

amendments to indictments in criminal cases might constitutionally be applied to pending suits;¹ and even in those States in which retrospective laws are forbidden, a cause must be tried under the rules of evidence existing at the time of the trial, though different from those in force when the suit was commenced.² And if a case is appealed, and pending the appeal the law is changed, the appellate court must dispose of the case under the law in force when their decision is rendered.³

But the healing statute must in all cases be confined to validating acts which the legislature might previously have authorized. * It cannot make good retrospectively acts or [* 382] contracts which it had and could have no power to permit or sanction in advance.⁴ There lies before us at this time a volume of statutes of one of the States, in which are contained acts declaring certain tax-rolls valid and effectual, notwithstanding the following irregularities and imperfections: a failure in the supervisor to carry out separately, opposite each parcel of land on the roll, the taxes charged upon such parcel, as required by law;

¹ *State v. Manning*, 11 Tex. 402.

² *Rich v. Flanders*, 39 N. H. 304.

³ *State v. Norwood*, 12 Md. 195.

In *Eaton v. United States*, 5 Cranch, 281, a vessel had been condemned in admiralty, and pending an appeal the act under which the condemnation was declared was repealed. The court held that the cause must be considered as if no sentence had been pronounced; and if no sentence had been pronounced, then, after the expiration or repeal of the law, no penalty could be enforced or punishment inflicted for a violation of the law committed while it was in force, unless some special provision of statute was made for that purpose. See also *Schooner Rachel v. United States*, 6 Cranch, 329; *Commonwealth v. Duane*, 1 Binney, 601; *United States v. Passmore*, 4 Dall. 372; *Commonwealth v. Marshall*, 11 Pick. 350; *Commonwealth v. Kimball*, 21 Pick. 373; *Hartung v. People*, 22 N. Y. 100; *Union Iron Co. v. Pierce*, 4 Biss. 327; *Norris v. Crocker*, 13 How.

129; *Insurance Co. v. Ritchie*, 5 Wall. 541; *Ex parte McCardle*, 7 Wall. 506; *United States v. Tyner*, 11 Wall. 88; *Engle v. Shurtz*, 1 Mich. 150. In the *McCardle* case the appellate jurisdiction of the United States Supreme Court in certain cases was taken away while a case was pending. Per *Chase*, Ch. J.: "Jurisdiction is power to declare the law; and when it ceases to exist, the only function remaining to the court is that of announcing the fact and dismissing the cause. This is not less clear upon authority than upon principle." But where a State has jurisdiction of a subject, *e. g.* pilotage, until Congress establishes regulations, and penalties are incurred under a State act, and afterwards Congress legislates on the subject, this does not repeal, but only suspends the State law; and a penalty previously incurred may still be collected. *Sturgis v. Spofford*, 45 N. Y. 446.

⁴ *Kimball v. Rosenthal*, (Sup. Ct. Wis.) 5 Cent. Law Journal, 372.

a failure in the supervisor to sign the certificate attached to the roll; a failure in the voters of the township to designate, as required by law, in a certain vote by which they had assumed the payment of bounty moneys, whether they should be raised by tax or loan; corrections made in the roll by the supervisor after it had been delivered to the collector; the including by the supervisor of a sum to be raised for township purposes without the previous vote of the township, as required by law; adding to the roll a sum to be raised which could not lawfully be levied by taxation without legislative authority; the failure of the supervisor to make out the roll within the time required by law; and the accidental omission of a parcel of land which should have been embraced by the roll. In each of these cases, except the last, the act required by law, and which failed to be performed, might by previous legislation have been dispensed with; and perhaps in the last case there might be question whether the roll was rendered invalid by the omission referred to, and, if it was, whether the subsequent act could legalize it.¹ But if township officers should assume to do acts under the power of taxation which could not lawfully be justified as an exercise of that power, no subsequent legislation could make them good. If, for instance, a part of the property in a taxing district should be assessed at one rate, and a part at another, for a burden resting equally upon all, there would be no such apportionment as is essential to taxation, and the roll would be beyond the reach of curative legislation.² And

¹ See *Weeks v. Milwaukee*, 10 Wis. 242; *Dean v. Gleason*, 16 Wis. 1; *post*, p. *515, note

² This is clearly shown by *McKinstry, J.*, in *People v. Lynch*, 51 Cal. 15. And see *Billings v. Detten*, 15 Ill. 218, *Conway v. Cable*, 37 Ill. 82, and *Thames Manufacturing Co. v. Lathrop*, 7 Conn. 550, for cases where curative statutes were held not effectual to reach defects in tax proceedings. As to what defects may or may not be cured by subsequent legislation, see *Allen v. Armstrong*, 18 Iowa, 508, *Smith v. Cleveland*, 17 Wis. 556, and *Abbott v. Lindenbower*, 42 Mo. 162. In *Tallman v. Janesville*, 17 Wis. 71, the constitutional authority

of the legislature to cause an irregular tax to be reassessed in a subsequent year, where the rights of *bona fide* purchasers had intervened, was disputed; but the court sustained the authority as "a salutary and highly beneficial feature of our systems of taxation," and "not to be abandoned because in some instances it produces individual hardships." Certainly *bona fide* purchasers, as between themselves and the State, must take their purchases subject to all public burdens justly resting upon them. The case of *Conway v. Cable* is instructive. It was there held among other things, — and very justly as we think, — that the legislature could not make good a

if persons or property should be assessed for taxation *in [* 383] a district which did not include them, not only would the assessment be invalid, but a healing statute would be ineffectual to charge them with the burden.¹ In such a case there would be a fatal want of jurisdiction ; and even in judicial proceedings, if there was originally a failure of jurisdiction, no subsequent law can confer it.²

Statutory Privileges and Exemptions.

The citizen has no vested right in statutory privileges and exemptions. Among these may be mentioned,—exemptions from the performance of public duty upon juries, or in the militia, and the like ; exemptions of property or person from assessment for the purposes of taxation ; exemptions of property from being seized on attachment, or execution, or for the payment of taxes ; exemption from highway labor, and the like. All these rest upon reasons of public policy, and the laws are changed as the varying circumstances seem to require. The State demands the performance of military duty by those persons only who are within certain specified ages ; but if, in the opinion of the legislature, the public exigencies should demand military service from all other persons capable of bearing arms, the privilege of exemption might be recalled, without violation of any constitutional principle. The fact that a party had passed the legal age under an existing law, and performed the service demanded by it, could not protect him against further calls, when public policy or public necessity was

tax sale effected by fraudulent combination between the officers and the purchasers. In *Miller v. Graham*, 17 Ohio, N. S. 1, a statute validating certain ditch assessments was sustained, notwithstanding the defects covered by it were not mere irregularities ; but that statute gave the parties an opportunity to be heard as to these defects.

¹ See *Wells v. Weston*, 22 Mo. 385 ; *People v. Supervisors of Chenango*, 11 N. Y. 563 ; *Hughey's Lessee v. Howell*, 2 Ohio, 231 ; *Covington v. Southgate*, 15 B. Monr. 491 ; *Morford v. Unger*, 8 Iowa, 82 ; *post*, pp. *499, *500.

² So held in *McDaniel v. Correll*,

19 Ill. 228, where a statute came under consideration which assumed to make valid certain proceedings in court which were void for want of jurisdiction of the persons concerned. See also *Denny v. Mattoon*, 2 Allen, 361 ; *Nelson v. Rountree*, 23 Wis. 367 ; *Griffin's Ex'r v. Cunningham*, 20 Grat. 109, per *Joyes, J.* ; *Richards v. Rote*, 68 Penn. St. 248 ; *State v. Doherty*, 60 Me. 504 ; *Pryor v. Downey*, 50 Cal. 388 ; s. c. 19 Am. Rep. 656. *Walpole v. Elliott*, 18 Ind. 259, is distinguishable from these cases. In that case there was not a failure of jurisdiction, but an irregular exercise of it.

thought to require them.¹ In like manner, exemptions from taxation are always subject to recall, when they have been granted merely as a privilege, and not for a consideration received by the public; as in the case of exemption of buildings for religious or educational purposes, and the like.² So, also, are exemptions of property from execution.³ So, a license to carry on a particular trade for a specified period, may be recalled before the period has elapsed.⁴ So, as before stated, a penalty given by statute may be taken away by statute at any time before judgment is recovered.⁵ So an offered bounty may be recalled, except as to so much as was actually earned while the offer was a continuing [* 384] one; * and the fact that a party has purchased property or incurred expenses in preparation for earning the bounty cannot preclude the recall.⁶ A franchise granted by the State

¹ *Commonwealth v. Bird*, 12 Mass. 443; *Swindle v. Brooks*, 34 Geo. 67; *Mayer, Ex parte*, 27 Tex. 713; *Bragg v. People*, 78 Ill. 328; *Moore v. Cass*, 10 Kan. 288; *Murphy v. People*, 37 Ill. 447; *State v. Miller*, 2 Blackf. 35; *State v. Quimby*, 51 Me. 395; *State v. Wright*, 53 Me. 328; *State v. Forshner*, 43 N. H. 89. And see *Dale v. The Governor*, 8 Stew. 387.

² See *ante*, pp. *280, *281, and notes. All the cases concede the right in the legislature to recall an exemption from taxation, when not resting upon contract. The subject was considered in *People v. Roper*, 35 N. Y. 629, in which it was decided that a limited immunity from taxation, tendered to the members of voluntary military companies, might be recalled at any time. It was held not to be a contract, but "only an expression of the legislative will for the time being, in a matter of mere municipal regulation." And see *Christ Church v. Philadelphia*, 24 How. 300; *Lord v. Litchfield*, 36 Conn. 116; *East Saginaw Salt Manuf. Co. v. East Saginaw*, 19 Mich. 259; s. c. in error, 13 Wall. 373.

³ *Bull v. Conroe*, 13 Wis. 238.

⁴ Of this there can be no question

unless a fee was paid for the license; and well-considered cases hold that it may be even then. See *Adams v. Hackett*, 5 Gray, 597; *Metropolitan Board of Excise v. Barrie*, 34 N. Y. 637; *ante*, p. *283, note.

⁵ *Oriental Bank v. Freeze*, 6 Shep. 109. The statute authorized the plaintiff, suing for a breach of a prison bond, to recover the amount of his judgment and costs. This was regarded by the court as in the nature of a penalty: and it was therefore held competent for the legislature, even after breach, to so modify the law as to limit the plaintiff's recovery to his actual damages. See *ante*, p. *362, note 5, and cases cited.

⁶ *East Saginaw Salt Manuf. Co. v. East Saginaw*, 19 Mich. 271; s. c. 2 Am. Rep. 82, and 13 Wall. 373. But as to so much of the bounty as was actually earned before the change in the law, the party earning it has a vested right which cannot be taken away. *People v. State Auditors*, 9 Mich. 327. And it has been held competent in changing a county seat to provide by law for compensation, through taxation to the residents of the old site. *Wilkinson v. Cheatham*, 43 Geo. 258.

with a reservation of a right of repeal must be regarded as a mere privilege while it is suffered to continue, but the legislature may take it away at any time, and the grantees must rely for the perpetuity and integrity of the franchises granted to them solely upon the faith of the sovereign grantor.¹ A statutory right to have cases reviewed on appeal may be taken away, by a repeal of the statute, even as to causes which had been previously appealed.² A mill-dam act which confers upon the person erecting a dam the right to maintain it, and flow the lands of private owners on paying such compensation as should be assessed for the injury done, may be repealed even as to dams previously erected.³ These illustrations must suffice under the present head.

Consequential Injuries.

It is a general rule that no one has a vested right to be protected against consequential injuries arising from a proper exercise of rights by others.⁴ This rule is peculiarly applicable to injuries resulting from the exercise of public powers. Under the police power the State sometimes destroys, for the time being, and perhaps permanently, the value to the owner of his property, without affording him any redress. The construction of a new way or the discontinuance of an old one may very seriously affect the value of adjacent property; the removal of a county or State capital will often reduce very largely the value of all the real estate of the place from whence it was removed; but in neither case can the parties, whose interests would be injuriously affected, enjoin the act, or claim compensation from the public.⁵ The general laws of the State may be so changed as to transfer, from one town to another, the obligation to support certain individuals, who may become entitled to support as paupers, and the Constitution will present no impediment.⁶ The granting of a charter to a new

¹ Per *Smith, J.*, in *Pratt v. Brown*, 3 Wis. 611. See *post*, pp. *578—*579, note.

² *Ex parte McCardle*, 7 Wall. 506.

³ *Pratt v. Brown*, 3 Wis. 603. But if the party maintaining the dam had paid to the other party for the permanent flowing of his land, a compensation assessed under the statute, it might be otherwise.

⁴ For the doctrine *damnum absque injuria*, see *Broom's Maxims*, 185; *Sedgwick on Damages*, 80, 112.

⁵ See *ante*, p. *208, and cases cited in note. Also *Wilkinson v. Cheatham*, 43 Geo. 258; *Fearing v. Irwin*, 55 N. Y. 486.

⁶ *Goshen v. Richmond*, 4 Allen, 460; *Bridgewater v. Plymouth*, 97 Mass. 390.

corporation may sometimes render valueless the franchise of an existing corporation ; but unless the State by contract has precluded itself from such new grant, the incidental injury [* 385] * can constitute no obstacle.¹ But indeed it seems idle to specify instances, inasmuch as all changes in the laws of the State are liable to inflict incidental injury upon individuals, and, if every citizen was entitled to remuneration for such injury, the most beneficial and necessary changes in the law might be found impracticable of accomplishment.

We have now endeavored to indicate what are and what are not to be regarded as vested rights, and to classify the cases in which individual interests, in possession or expectancy, are protected against being divested by the direct interposition of legislative authority. Some other cases may now be considered, in which legislation has endeavored to control parties as to the manner in which they should make use of their property, or has permitted claims to be created against it through the action of other parties against the will of the owners. We do not allude now to the control which the State may possess through an exercise of the police power, — a power which is merely one of regulation with a view to the best interests and the most complete enjoyment of rights by all, — but to that which, under a claim of State policy, and without any reference to wrongful act or omission by the owner, would exercise a supervision over his enjoyment of un-

¹ The State of Massachusetts granted to a corporation the right to construct a toll-bridge across the Charles River, under a charter which was to continue for forty years, afterwards extended to seventy, at the end of which period the bridge was to become the property of the Commonwealth. During the term the corporation was to pay 200*l.* annually to Harvard College. Forty-two years after the bridge was opened for passengers, the State incorporated a company for the purpose of erecting another bridge over the same river, a short distance only from the first, and which would accommodate the same passengers. The necessary effect would be to decrease greatly

the value of the first franchise, if not to render it altogether worthless. But the first charter was not exclusive in its terms; no contract was violated in granting the second; the resulting injury was incidental to the exercise of an undoubted right by the State, and as all the vested rights of the first corporation still remained, though reduced in value by the new grant, the case was one of damage without legal injury. *Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge*, 7 Pick. 344, and 11 Pet. 420. See also *Turnpike Co. v. State*, 3 Wall. 210; *Piscataqua Bridge v. New Hampshire Bridge*, 7 N. H. 35; *English v. New Haven, &c. Co.*, 32 Conn. 240; *Binghamton Bridge Case*, 27 N. Y. 87, and 3 Wall. 51.

doubted rights, or which, in some cases, would compel him to recognize and satisfy demands upon his property which have been created without his assent.

In former times sumptuary laws were sometimes passed, and they were even deemed essential in republics to restrain the luxury so fatal to that species of government.¹ But the ideas which suggested such laws are now exploded utterly, and no one would seriously attempt to justify them in the present age. The right of every man to do what he will with his own, not interfering with the reciprocal right of others, is accepted among the fundamentals of our law. The instances of attempt to interfere with it have not been numerous since the early colonial days. A notable instance of an attempt to substitute the legislative judgment for that of the proprietor, regarding the manner in which he should use and employ his property, may be mentioned. In the State of Kentucky an act was at one time passed to compel the owners of wild lands to make certain improvements upon them within a specified time, and declared them forfeited to the State in case the statute was not complied with. It would be difficult to frame, consistently with the general principles of free government, a plausible argument in support of such a statute. It was not an exercise of the right of eminent domain, for that appropriates property to some specific public use on making compensation. It was not taxation, for that is simply an apportionment of the burden of supporting the government. It was not a police regulation, for that could not go beyond preventing an improper use of the land with reference to * the due exer- [* 386] cise of rights and enjoyment of legal privileges by others. It was purely and simply a law to forfeit a man's property, if he failed to improve it according to a standard which the legislature

¹ Montesq. *Sp. of the Laws*, B. 7. Such laws, though common in some countries, have never been numerous in England. See references to the legislation of this character, 4 Bl. Com. 170. Some of these statutes prescribed the number of courses permissible at dinner or other meal, while others were directed to restraining extravagance in dress. See Hallam, *Mid. Ages*, c. 9, pt. II.; and as to Roman sumptuary laws, *Encyc.*

Metrop. Vol. X. p. 110. Adam Smith said of such laws, "It is the highest impertinence and presumption in kings and ministers to pretend to watch over the economy of private people, and to restrain their expense, either by sumptuary laws, or by prohibiting the importation of foreign luxuries." *Wealth of Nations*, B. 2, c. 3. As to prohibitory liquor laws, see *post*, pp. *581-*584.

had prescribed. To such a power, if possessed by the government, there could be no limit but the legislative discretion; and if defensible on principle, then a law which should authorize the officer to enter a man's dwelling and seize and confiscate his furniture if it fell below, or his food if it exceeded, an established legal standard, would be equally so. But in a free country such laws when mentioned are condemned instinctively.¹

But cases may sometimes present themselves in which improvements actually made by one man upon the land of another, even though against the will of the owner, ought on grounds of strict equity to constitute a charge upon the land improved. If they have been made in good faith, and under a reasonable expectation on the part of the person making them, that he was to reap the benefit of them, and if the owner has stood by and suffered them to be made, but afterwards has recovered the land and appropriated the improvements, it would seem that there must exist against him at least a strong equitable claim for reimbursement of the expenditures made, and perhaps no sufficient reason why provision should not be made by law for their recovery.

Accordingly in the several States statutes will be found which undertake to provide for these equitable claims. These statutes are commonly known as *betterment laws*; and as an illustration of the whole class, we give the substance of that adopted in Vermont. It provided that after recovery in ejectment, where he or those through whom he claimed had purchased or taken a lease of the land, supposing at the time that the title purchased was good, or the lease valid to convey and secure the title and interest therein expressed, the defendant should be entitled to recover of the plaintiff the full value of the improvements made by him or by those through whom he claimed, to be assessed by jury, and to be enforced against the land, and not otherwise. The value was ascertained by estimating the increased value of the land in consequence of the improvements, but the plaintiff at his election might have the value of the land without the improvements assessed, and the defendant should purchase the same at that price within four years, or lose the benefit of his claim for improvements. But the benefit of the law was not given

¹ The Kentucky statute referred to in *Gaines v. Buford*, 1 Dana, 499. See also *Violett v. Violett*, 2 Dana, 326.

with the owner, unless it should appear that the owner had failed to fulfil such contract on his part.¹

This statute, and similar ones which preceded it, have been adjudged constitutional by the Supreme Court of Vermont, and have frequently been enforced. In an early case the court explained the principle of these statutes as follows: "The action for betterments, as they are now termed in the statute, is given on the supposition that the legal title is found to be in the plaintiff in ejectment, and is intended to secure to the defendant the fruit of his labor, and to the plaintiff all that he is justly entitled to, which is his land in as good a situation as it would have been had no labor been bestowed thereon. The statute is highly equitable in all its provisions, and would do exact justice if the value either of the improvements or of the land was always correctly estimated. The principles upon which it is founded are taken from the civil law, where ample provision was made for reimbursing the *bona fide* possessor the expense of his improvements, if he was removed from his possession by the legal owner. It gives to the possessor not the expense which he has laid out on the land, but the amount which he has increased the value of the land by his betterments thereon; or, in other words, the difference between the value of the land as it is when the owner recovers it, and the value if no improvement had been made. If the owner takes the land together with the improvements, at the advanced value which it has from the labor of the possessor, what can be more just than that he should pay the difference? But if he is unwilling to pay this difference, by giving a deed as the statute provides, he receives the value as it would have been if nothing had been done thereon. The only objection which can be made is, that it is sometimes compelling the owner to sell when he may have been content with the property in its natural state. But this, when weighed against the loss to the *bona fide* possessor, and against the injustice of depriving him of the fruits of his labor, and giving it to another, who, by his negligence in not sooner enforcing his claim, has in some measure contributed to the mistake under which he has labored, is not entitled to very great consideration." ²

¹ Revised Statutes of Vermont of 1839, p. 216. class of legislation was also elaborately examined and defended by

² *Brown v. Storm*, 4 Vt. 37. This *Trumbull, J.*, in *Ross v. Irving*, 14 Ill.

[* 388] * The last circumstance stated in this opinion—the negligence of the owner in asserting his claim—is evidently deemed important in some States, whose statutes only allow a recovery for improvements by one who has been in possession a certain number of years. But a later Vermont case dismisses it from consideration as a necessary ground on which to base the right of recovery. “The right of the occupant to recover the value of his improvements,” say the court, “does not depend upon the question whether the real owner has been vigilant or negligent in the assertion of his rights. It stands upon a principle of natural justice and equity; viz., that the occupant in good faith, believing himself to be the owner, has added to the permanent value of the land by his labor and his money; is in equity entitled to such added value; and that it would be unjust that the owner of the land should be enriched by acquiring the value of such improvements, without compensation to him who made them. This principle of natural justice has been very widely, we may say universally recognized.”¹

171, and in some of the other cases referred to in the succeeding note. See also *Bright v. Boyd*, 1 Story, 478; s. c. 2 Story, 607.

¹ *Whitney v. Richardson*, 31 Vt. 308. For other cases in which similar laws have been held constitutional, see *Armstrong v. Jackson*, 1 Blackf. 374; *Fowler v. Halbert*, 4 Bibb, 54; *Withington v. Corey*, 2 N. H. 115; *Bacon v. Callender*, 6 Mass. 303; *Pacquette v. Pickness*, 19 Wis. 219; *Childs v. Shower*, 18 Iowa, 261; *Scott v. Mather*, 14 Tex. 235; *Saunders v. Wilson*, 19 Tex. 194; *Brackett v. Norcross*, 1 Greenl. 92; *Hunt's Lessee v. McMahan*, 5 Ohio, 132; *Longworth v. Worthington*, 6 Ohio, 10. See further, *Jones v. Carter*, 12 Mass. 314; *Coney v. Owen*, 6 Watts, 435; *Steele v. Spruance*, 22 Penn. St. 256; *Lynch v. Brudie*, 63 Penn. St. 206; *Dothage v. Stuart*, 35 Mo. 251; *Fenwick v. Gill*, 38 Mo. 510; *Howard v. Zeyer*, 18 La. Ann. 407; *Pope v. Macon*, 23 Ark. 644; *Marlow v. Adams*, 24 Ark. 109; *Ormond v. Martin*, 37 Ala. 598; *Love v. Shartzler*, 31 Cal. 487. For a

contrary ruling, see *Nelson v. Allen*, 1 Yerg. 376, in which, however, Judge *Catron* in a note says the question was really not involved. Mr. Justice *Story* held, in *Society, &c. v. Wheeler*, 2 Gall. 105, that such a law could not constitutionally be made to apply to improvements made before its passage; but this decision was made under the New Hampshire Constitution, which forbade retrospective laws. The principles of equity upon which such legislation is sustained would seem not to depend upon the time when the improvements were made. See *Davis's Lessee v. Powell*, 13 Ohio, 308. In *Childs v. Shower*, 18 Iowa, 261, it was held that the legislature could not constitutionally make the value of the improvements a personal charge against the owner of the land, and authorize a personal judgment against him. The same ruling was had in *McCoy v. Grandy*, 3 Ohio, n. s. 463. A statute had been passed authorizing the occupying claimant at his option, after judgment rendered against him for the recovery of the

* Betterment laws, then, recognize the existence of an [*389] equitable right, and give a remedy for its enforcement where none had existed before. It is true that they make a man pay for improvements which he has not directed to be made ; but this legislation presents no feature of officious interference by the government with private property. The improvements have been made by one person in good faith, and are now to be appropriated by another. The parties cannot be placed *in statu quo*, and the statute accomplishes justice as nearly as the circumstances of the case will admit, when it compels the owner of the land, who, if he declines to sell, must necessarily appropriate the betterments made by another, to pay the value to the person at whose expense they have been made. The case is peculiar ; but a statute cannot be void as an unconstitutional interference with private property which adjusts the equities of the parties as nearly as possible according to natural justice.¹

Unequal and Partial Legislation.

In the course of our discussion of this subject it has been seen that some statutes are void though general in their scope, while others are valid though establishing rules for single cases only. An enactment may therefore be the law of the land without being a general law. And this being so, it may be important to

land, to demand payment from the successful claimant of the full value of his lasting and valuable improvements, or to pay to the successful claimant the value of the land without the improvements, and retain it. The court say: "The occupying claimant act, in securing to the occupant a compensation for his improvements as a condition precedent to the restitution of the lands to the owner, goes to the utmost stretch of the legislative power touching this subject. And the statute . . . providing for the transfer of the fee in the land to the occupying claimant, without the consent of the owner, is a palpable invasion of the right of private property, and clearly in conflict with the Constitution."

¹ In *Harris v. Inhabitants of Marblehead*, 10 Gray, 44, it was held that the betterment law did not apply to a town which had appropriated private property for the purposes of a school-house, and erected the house thereon. The law, it was said, did not apply "where a party is taking land by force of the statute, and is bound to see that all the steps are regular. If it did, the party taking the land might in fact compel a sale of the land, or compel the party to buy the school-house, or any other building erected upon it." But as a matter of constitutional authority, we see no reason to doubt that the legislature might extend such a law even to the cases of this description.

consider in what cases constitutional principles will require a statute to be general in its operation, and in what cases, on the other hand, it may be valid without being general. We speak now in reference to general constitutional principles, and not to any peculiar rules which may have become established by special provisions in the constitutions of individual States.

The cases relating to municipal corporations stand upon peculiar grounds from the fact that those corporations are agencies of government, and as such are subject to complete legislative control. Statutes authorizing the sale of property of minors and other persons under disability are also exceptional, in that they are applied for by the parties representing the interests of the owners, and are remedial in their character. Such statutes are supported by the presumption that the parties in interest would consent if capable of doing so; and in law they are to be [* 390] considered as assenting in * the person of the guardians or trustees of their rights. And perhaps in any other case, if a party petitions for legislation and avails himself of it, he may justly be held estopped from disputing its validity;¹ so that the great bulk of private legislation which is adopted from year to year, may at once be dismissed from this discussion.

Laws public in their objects may, unless express constitutional provision forbids,² be either general or local in their application; they may embrace many subjects or one, and they may extend to all citizens, or be confined to particular classes, as minors or married women, bankers or traders, and the like.³ The authority that legislates for the State at large must determine whether particular rules shall extend to the whole State and all its citi-

¹ This doctrine was applied in *Ferguson v. Landram*, 5 Bush, 230, to parties who had obtained a statute for the levy of a tax to refund bounty moneys, which statute was held void as to other persons. And see *Motz v. Detroit*, 18 Mich. 495. A man may be bound by his assent to an act changing the rules of descent in his particular case, though it would be void if not assented to. *Beall v. Beall*, 8 Geo. 210.

² See *ante*, p. *128, note, and cases cited. To make a statute a public law of general obligation, it is not

necessary that it should be equally applicable to all parts of the State; all that is required is that it shall apply equally to all persons within the territorial limits described in the act. *State v. County Commissioners of Baltimore*, 29 Md. 516. See *Pollock v. McClurken*, 42 Ill. 370; *Haskell v. Burlington*, 30 Iowa, 232.

³ See the *Iowa R. R. Land Co. v. Soper*, 39 Iowa, 112; *Matter of Goodell*, 39 Wis. 232; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 42; *Commonwealth v. Hamilton Manuf. Co.*, 120 Mass. 383.

zens, or, on the other hand, to a subdivision of the State or a single class of its citizens only. The circumstances of a particular locality, or the prevailing public sentiment in that section of the State, may require or make acceptable different police regulations from those demanded in another, or call for different taxation, and a different application of the public moneys. The legislature may therefore prescribe or authorize different laws of police, allow the right of eminent domain to be exercised in different cases and through different agencies, and prescribe peculiar restrictions upon taxation in each distinct municipality, provided the State constitution does not forbid. These discriminations are made constantly; and the fact that the laws are of local or special operation only is not supposed to render them obnoxious in principle. The legislature may also deem it desirable to prescribe peculiar rules for the several occupations, and to establish distinctions in the rights, obligations, duties, and capacities of citizens. The business of common carriers, for instance, or of bankers, may require special statutory regulations for the general benefit, and it may be matter of public policy to give laborers in one business a specific lien for their wages, when it would be impracticable or impolitic to do the same by persons engaged in some other employments. If the laws be otherwise unobjectionable, all that can be required in these cases is, that they be general in their application to the class or locality to which they apply; and they are then public in character, and of their propriety and policy the legislature must judge.

But a statute would not be constitutional which should proscribe a class or a party for opinion's sake,¹ or which should

¹ The sixth section of the Metropolitan Police Law of Baltimore (1859) provided that "no Black Republican, or indorser or supporter of the Helper book, shall be appointed to any office" under the Board of Police which it established. This was claimed to be unconstitutional, as introducing into legislation the principle of proscription for the sake of political opinion, which was directly opposed to the cardinal principles on which the Constitution was founded. The court dismissed the objection in the following words: "That portion of the sixth

section which relates to Black Republicans, &c., is obnoxious to the objection urged against it, if we are to consider that class of persons as proscribed on account of their political or religious opinions. But we cannot understand, officially, who are meant to be affected by the proviso, and therefore cannot express a judicial opinion on the question." *Baltimore v. State*, 15 Md. 468. See also p. 484. This does not seem to be a very satisfactory disposition of so grave a constitutional objection to a legislative act. That courts may take judicial notice of

[* 391] select particular *individuals from a class or locality, and subject them to peculiar rules, or impose upon them special obligations or burdens from which others in the same locality or class are exempt.¹

The legislature may suspend the operation of the general laws of the State; but when it does so the suspension must be general, and cannot be made for individual cases or for particular localities.² Privileges may be granted to particular individuals when

the fact that the electors of the country are divided into parties with well-known designations cannot be doubted; and when one of these is proscribed by a name familiarly applied to it by its opponents, the inference that it is done because of political opinion seems to be too conclusive to need further support than that which is found in the act itself. And we know no reason why courts should decline to take notice of those facts of general notoriety, which, like the names of political parties, are a part of the public history of the times. A statute requiring causes in which the venue has been changed to be remanded on the affidavits of three unconditional Union men, that justice can be had in the courts where it originated, held void, on the principles stated in the text in *Brown v. Haywood*, 4 Heisk. 357.

It has been decided that State laws forbidding the intermarriage of whites and blacks are such police regulations as are entirely within the power of the States, notwithstanding the provisions of the new amendments to the federal Constitution. *State v. Gibson*, 36 Ind. 389; s. c. 10 Am. Rep. 42; *State v. Hairston*, 63 N. C. 451; *Ellis v. State*, 42 Ala. 525; *Lonas v. State*, 3 Heisk. 287; s. c. 1 Green. Cr. R. 452; *Ex rel. Hobbs and Johnson*, 1 Woods, 537. But *Ellis v. State* is overruled by *Burns v. State*, 48 Ala. 195; s. c. 17 Am. Rep. 34. It is also said colored children may be required to attend separate schools, if impartial provision is made for their

instruction. *State v. Duffy*, 7 Nev. 342; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 713; *Cory v. Carter*, 48 Ind. 327; *Ward v. Flood*, 48 Cal. 36; *State v. McCann*, 21 Ohio, N. S. 198. But some States forbid this. *People v. Board of Education*, 18 Mich. 400; *Clark v. Board of Directors*, 24 Iowa, 266; *Dove v. School District*, 41 Iowa, 689. And when separate schools are not established for colored children, they are entitled to admission to the other public schools. *State v. Duffy, supra*.

¹ *Lin Sing v. Washburn*, 20 Cal. 534. There is no reason, however, why the law should not take notice of peculiar views held by some classes of people, which unfit them for certain public duties, and excuse them from the performance of such duties; as Quakers are excused from military duty, and persons denying the right to inflict capital punishment are excluded from juries in capital cases. These, however, are in the nature of exemptions, and they rest upon considerations of obvious necessity.

² The statute of limitations cannot be suspended in particular cases while allowed to remain in force generally. *Holden v. James*, 11 Mass. 396; *Davison v. Johonnot*, 7 Met. 393. See *ante*, p. *365, note. The general exemption laws cannot be varied for particular cases or localities. *Bull v. Conroe*, 13 Wis. 238, 244. The legislature, when forbidden to grant divorces, cannot pass special acts authorizing the courts to grant divorces in particular cases for causes not recognized in the general law.

by so doing the rights of others are not interfered with ; disabilities may be removed ; the legislature as *parens patriæ*, when not forbidden, may grant authority to the guardians or trustees of incompetent persons to exercise a statutory control over their estates for their assistance, comfort, or support, or for the discharge of legal or equitable liens upon their property ; but every one has a right to demand that he be governed by general rules, and a special statute which, without his consent, singles his case out as one to be regulated by a different law from that which is applied * in all similar cases, would not be legitimate legislation, but would be such an arbitrary mandate as is not within the province of free governments. Those who make the laws “are to govern by promulgated, established laws, not to be varied in particular cases, but to have one rule for rich and poor, for the favorite at court and the countryman at plough.”¹ This is a maxim in constitutional law, and by it we may test the authority and binding force of legislative enactments.²

Teft v. Teft, 3 Mich. 671 ; *Simonds v. Simonds*, 103 Mass. 572. See, for the same principle, *Alter's Appeal*, 67 Penn. St. 341. The authority in emergencies to suspend the civil laws in a part of the State only, by a declaration of martial law, we do not call in question by any thing here stated. Nor in what we have here said do we have any reference to suspensions of the laws generally, or of any particular law, under the extraordinary circumstances of rebellion or war.

¹ Locke on Civil Government, § 142 ; *State v. Duffy*, 7 Nev. 349.

² In *Lewis v. Webb*, 3 Me. 326, the validity of a statute granting an appeal from a decree of the Probate Court in a particular case came under review. The court say : “ On principle it can never be within the bounds of legitimate legislation to enact a special law, or pass a resolve dispensing with the general law in a particular case, and granting a privilege and indulgence to one man, by way of exemption from the operation and

effect of such general law, leaving all other persons under its operation. Such a law is neither just nor reasonable in its consequences. It is our boast that we live under a government of laws, and not of men ; but this can hardly be deemed a blessing, unless those laws have for their immovable basis the great principles of constitutional equality. Can it be supposed for a moment that, if the legislature should pass a general law, and add a section by way of proviso, that it never should be construed to have any operation or effect upon the persons, rights, or property of Archelaus Lewis or John Gordon, such a proviso would receive the sanction or even the countenance of a court of law ? And how does the supposed case differ from the present ? A resolve passed after the general law can produce only the same effect as such proviso. In fact, neither can have any legal operation.” See also *Durham v. Lewiston*, 4 Greenl. 140 ; *Holden v. James*, 11 Mass. 396 ; *Piquet, Appellant*, 5 Pick. 64 ; *Budd*

Special courts cannot be created for the trial of the rights and obligations of particular parties;¹ and those cases in which legislative acts granting new trials or other special relief in judicial proceedings, while they have been regarded as usurpations of judicial authority, have also been considered obnoxious to the objection that they undertook to suspend general [* 398] laws in special * cases.

(X) whether a regulation made for any one class of citizens, entirely arbitrary in its character, and restricting their rights, privileges, or legal capacities in a manner before unknown to the law, could be sustained, notwithstanding its generality. Distinctions in these respects must rest upon some reason upon which they can be defended, — like the want of capacity in infants and insane persons; and, if the legislature should undertake to provide that persons following some specified lawful trade or employment should not have capacity to make contracts, or to receive conveyances, or to build such houses as others were allowed to erect, or in any other way to make such use of their property as was permissible to others, it can scarcely be doubted that the act would transcend the due bounds of legislative power, even though no express constitutional provision could be pointed out with which it would come in conflict. To forbid

v. State, 3 Humph. 483; *Van Zant v. Waddell*, 2 Yerg. 260; *People v. Frisbie*, 26 Cal. 135; *Davis v. Menasha*, 21 Wis. 497; *Lancaster v. Barr*, 25 Wis. 560; *Brown v. Haywood*, 4 Heisk. 357; *Wally's Heirs v. Kennedy*, 2 Yerg. 554. In the last case it is said: "The rights of every individual must stand or fall by the same rule or law that governs every other member of the body politic, or land, under similar circumstances; and every partial or private law, which directly proposes to destroy or affect individual rights, or does the same thing by affording remedies leading to similar consequences, is unconstitutional and void. Were it otherwise, odious individuals and corporations would be governed by one law; the mass of the community and those who made the law, by another; whereas the like general law affecting the whole com-

munity equally could not have been passed." See further, *Officer v. Young*, 5 Yerg. 320; *Griffin v. Cunningham*, 20 Grat. 31 (an instructive case); *Dorsey v. Dorsey*, 37 Md. 64; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 528; *Trustees v. Bailey*, 10 Fla. 238; *Lawson v. Jeffries*, 47 Miss. 686; s. c. 12 Am. Rep. 342; *Arnold v. Kelley*, 5 W. Va. 446; *ante*, pp. *95-*96.

¹ As, for instance, the debtors of a particular bank. *Bank of the State v. Cooper*, 2 Yerg. 599. Compare *Durkee v. Janesville*, 28 Wis. 464, in which it was declared that a special exemption of the city of Janesville from the payment of costs in any proceeding against it to set aside a tax or tax sale was void. In *matter of Nichols*, 8 R. I. 50, a special act admitting a tort debtor committed to jail to take the poor debtor's oath and be discharged, was held void.

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to an individual or a class the right to the acquisition or enjoyment of property in such manner as should be permitted to the community at large, would be to deprive them of (*liberty*) in particulars of primary importance to their "pursuit of happiness;"¹ and those who should claim a right to do so ought to be able to show a specific authority therefor, instead of calling upon others to show how and where the authority is negatived.

Equality of rights, privileges, and capacities unquestionably should be the aim of the law; and if special privileges are granted, or special burdens or restrictions imposed in any case, it must be presumed that the legislature designed to depart as little as possible from this fundamental maxim of government.²

¹ Burlamaqui (Polit. Law, c. 3, § 15) defines *natural liberty* as the right which nature gives to all mankind of disposing of their persons and property after the manner they judge most consonant to their happiness, on condition of their acting within the limits of the law of nature, and so as not to interfere with an equal exercise of the same rights by other men. See 1 Bl. Com. 125. Lieber says: "Liberty of social man consists in the protection of unrestrained action in as high a degree as the same claim of protection of each individual admits of, or in the most efficient protection of his rights, claims, interests, as a man or citizen, or of his humanity manifested as a social being." Civil Liberty and Self-Government. "Legal liberty," says Mackintosh, in his essay on the Study of the Law of Nature and of Nations, "consists in every man's security against wrong."

² In the Case of Monopolies, Darcy v. Allain, 11 Rep. 84, the grant of an exclusive privilege of making playing cards was adjudged void, inasmuch as "the sole trade of any mechanical artifice, or any other monopoly, is not only a damage and prejudice to those who exercise the same trade, but also to all other subjects; for the end of all these monopolies is for the private gain of the patentees." And see Norwich Gas

Light Co. v. Norwich City Gas Co., 25 Conn. 19; State v. Cincinnati, &c. Gas Co., 18 Ohio, N. S. 262. Compare with these State v. Milwaukee Gas Light Co., 29 Wis. 454. On this ground it has been denied that the State can exercise the power of taxation on behalf of corporations who undertake to make or to improve the thoroughfares of trade and travel for their own benefit. The State, it is said, can no more tax the community to set one class of men up in business than another; can no more subsidize one occupation than another; can no more make donations to the men who build and own railroads in consideration of expected incidental benefits, than it can make them to the men who build stores or manufactories in consideration of similar expected benefits. People v. Township Board of Salem, 20 Mich. 452. See further, as to monopolies, Chicago v. Rumpff, 45 Ill. 90; Gale v. Kalamazoo, 23 Mich. 344. In State v. Mayor, &c. of Newark, 35 N. J. 157, S. C. 10 Am. Rep. 223, the doctrine of the text was applied to a case in which by statute the property of a society had been exempted from "taxes and assessments;" and it was held that only the ordinary public taxes were meant, and the property might be subjected to local assessments for municipal purposes.

The State, it is to be presumed, has no favors to bestow, and designs to inflict no arbitrary deprivation of rights. Special privileges are always obnoxious, and discriminations against persons or classes are still more so; and, as a rule of construction, it is to be presumed they were probably not contemplated or designed. It has been held that a statute requiring attorneys to render services in suits for poor persons without fee or reward,

was to be confined strictly to the cases therein prescribed; [* 394] and if by its terms it * expressly covered civil cases only,

it could not be extended to embrace defences of criminal prosecutions.¹ So where a constitutional provision confined the elective franchise to "*white male citizens*," and it appeared that the legislation of the State had always treated of negroes, mulattoes, and *other colored persons* in contradistinction to white, it was held that although quadroons, being a recognized class of colored persons, must be excluded, yet that the rule of exclusion would not be carried further.² So a statute making parties witnesses against themselves cannot be construed to compel them to disclose facts which would subject them to criminal punishment.³ And a statute which authorizes summary process in favor of a bank against debtors who have by express contract made their obligations payable at such bank, being in derogation of the ordinary principles of private right, must be subject to strict construction.⁴ These cases are only illustrations of a rule of general acceptance.⁵

There are unquestionably cases in which the State may grant privileges to specified individuals without violating any constitutional principle, because, from the nature of the case, it is impossible they should be possessed and enjoyed by all; and if it is

¹ Webb v. Baird, 6 Ind. 13.

² People v. Dean, 14 Mich. 406. See Bailey v. Fiske, 34 Me. 77; Monroe v. Collins, 17 Ohio, n. s. 665. The decisions in Ohio were still more liberal, and ranked as white persons all who had a preponderance of white blood. Gray v. State, 4 Ohio, 354; Jeffres v. Ankeny, 11 Ohio, 372; Thacker v. Hawk, 11 Ohio, 376; Anderson v. Millikin, 9 Ohio, n. s. 406. But see Van Camp v. Board of Education, 9 Ohio, n. s. 406. Happily all such questions are now disposed

of by constitutional amendments. It seems, however, in the opinion of the Supreme Court of California, that these amendments do not preclude a State denying to a race, *e. g.* the Chinese, the right to testify against other persons. People v. Brady, 40 Cal. 198; s. c. 6 Am. Rep. 604.

³ Broadbent v. State, 7 Md. 416. See Knowles v. People, 15 Mich. 408.

⁴ Bank of Columbia v. Okely, 4 Wheat. 241.

⁵ See 1 Bl. Com. 89, and note.

important that they should exist, the proper State authority must be left to select the grantees.¹ Of this class are grants of the franchise to be a corporation. Such grants, however, which confer upon a few persons what cannot be shared by the many, and which, though supposed to be made on public grounds, are nevertheless frequently of great value to the corporators, and therefore sought with avidity, are never to be extended by construction beyond the plain terms in which they are conferred. No rule is better settled than that charters of incorporation are to be construed strictly against the corporators.² The just presumption in *every such case is, that the State [* 395] has granted in express terms all that it designed to grant at all. “When a State,” says the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, “means to clothe a corporate body with a portion of her own sovereignty, and to disarm herself to that extent of the power that belongs to her, it is so easy to say so, that we will never believe it to be meant when it is not said. . . . In the construction of a charter, to be in doubt is to be resolved; and every resolution which springs from doubt is against the corporation. If the usefulness of the company would be increased by extending [its privileges], let the legislature see to it, but remember that nothing but plain English words will do it.”³ This is sound doctrine, and should be vigilantly observed and enforced.

¹ In *Gordon v. Building Association*, 12 Bush, 110, it is decided that a special privilege granted to a particular corporation to take an interest on its loans greater than the regular interest allowed by law is void; it not being granted in consideration of any obligation assumed by the corporation to serve the public.

² *Providence Bank v. Billings*, 4 Pet. 514; *Charles River Bridge v. Warren Bridge*, 11 Pet. 514; *Perrine v. Chesapeake and Delaware Canal Co.*, 9 How. 172; *Richmond, &c. R. R. Co. v. Louisa R. R. Co.*, 13 How. 71; *Bradley v. N. Y. & N. H. R. R. Co.*, 21 Conn. 294; *Parker v. Sunbury and Erie R. R. Co.*, 19 Penn. St. 211; *Wales v. Stetson*, 2 Mass. 143; *Chenango Bridge Co. v. Binghamton Bridge Co.*, 27 N. Y. 87, and

3 Wall. 51; *State v. Krebs*, 64 N. C. 604.

³ *Pennsylvania R. R. Co. v. Canal Commissioners*, 21 Penn. St. 22. And see *Commonwealth v. Pittsburg, &c. R. R. Co.*, 24 Penn. St. 159; *Chenango Bridge Co. v. Binghamton Bridge Co.*, 27 N. Y. 93, per *Wright, J.*; *Baltimore v. Baltimore, &c. R. R. Co.*, 21 Md. 50; *Richmond v. Richmond and Danville R. R. Co.*, 21 Grat. 614; *Holyoke Co. v. Lyman*, 15 Wall. 500; *Delancey v. Insurance Co.*, 52 N. H. 581. We quote from the Supreme Court of Connecticut in *Bradley v. N. Y. and N. H. R. R. Co.*, 21 Conn. 306: “The rules of construction which apply to general legislation, in regard to those subjects in which the public at large are interested, are essentially different from those which

[* 396] * And this rule is not confined to the grant of a corporate franchise, but it extends to all grants of franchises or privileges by the State to individuals, in the benefits of which the people at large cannot participate. "Private statutes," says *Parsons*, Ch. J., "made for the accommodation of particular citizens or corporations, ought not to be construed to affect the rights or privileges of others, unless such construction results from express words or from necessary implication."¹ And the grant of

apply to private grants to individuals, of powers or privileges designed to be exercised with special reference to their own advantage, although involving in their exercise incidental benefits to the community generally. The former are to be expounded largely and beneficially for the purposes for which they were enacted; the latter liberally, in favor of the public, and strictly as against the grantees. The power in the one case is original and inherent in the State or sovereign power, and is exercised solely for the general good of the community; in the other it is merely derivative, is special if not exclusive in its character, and is in derogation of common right, in the sense that it confers privileges to which the members of the community at large are not entitled. Acts of the former kind, being dictated solely by a regard to the benefit of the public generally, attract none of that prejudice or jealousy towards them which naturally would arise towards those of the other description, from the consideration that the latter were obtained with a view to the benefit of particular individuals, and the apprehension that their interests might be promoted at the sacrifice or to the injury of those of others whose interests should be equally regarded. It is universally understood to be one of the implied and necessary conditions upon which men enter into society and form governments, that sacrifices must sometimes be required of individuals for

the general benefit of the community, for which they have no rightful claim to specific compensation; but, as between the several individuals composing the community, it is the duty of the State to protect them in the enjoyment of just and equal rights. A law, therefore, enacted for the common good, and which there would ordinarily be no inducement to pervert from that purpose, is entitled to be viewed with less jealousy and distrust than one enacted to promote the interests of particular persons, and which would constantly present a motive for encroaching on the rights of others."

¹ *Coolidge v. Williams*, 4 Mass. 140. See also *Dyer v. Tuscaloosa Bridge Co.*, 2 Port. (Ala.) 296; *Grant v. Leach*, 20 La. Ann. 329. In *Sprague v. Birdsall*, 2 Cow. 419, it was held that one embarking upon the Cayuga Lake six miles from the bridge of the Cayuga Bridge Co., and crossing the lake in an oblique direction so as to land within sixty rods of the bridge, was not liable to pay toll under a provision in the charter of said company which made it unlawful for any person to cross, within three miles of the bridge without paying toll. In another case arising under the same charter, which authorized the company to build a bridge across the lake or the outlet thereof, and to rebuild in case it should be destroyed or carried away by the ice, and prohibited all other persons from erecting a bridge within

ferry rights, or the right to erect a toll-bridge, and the like, is not only to be construed strictly against the grantees, but it will not be held to exclude the grant of a similar and competing privilege to others, unless the terms of the grant render such construction imperative.¹

* The Constitution of the United States contains pro- [* 397] visions which are important in this connection. One of these is, that the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens of the several States,² and all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to its jurisdiction, are declared to be citizens thereof, and of the State wherein they reside.³ The States are also forbidden to make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States, or to deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, or to deny to any person within their jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.⁴ Although the precise meaning of "privileges and immu-

three miles of the place where a bridge should be erected by the company, it was held, after the company had erected a bridge across the lake and it had been carried away by the ice, that they had no authority afterwards to rebuild across the *outlet* of the lake, two miles from the place where the first bridge was built, and that the restricted limits were to be measured from the place where the first bridge was erected. *Cayuga Bridge Co. v. Magee*, 2 Paige, 116; s. c. 6 Wend. 85. In *Chapin v. The Paper Works*, 30 Conn. 461, it was held that statutes giving a preference to certain creditors over others should be construed with reasonable strictness, as the law favored equality. In *People v. Lambier*, 5 Denio, 9, it appeared that an act of the legislature had authorized a proprietor of lands lying in the East River, which is an arm of the sea, to construct wharves and bulkheads in the river, in front of his land, and there was at the time a public highway through the land, terminating at the river. Held, that the proprietor could not, by filling up

the land between the shore and the bulkhead, obstruct the public right of passage from the land to the water, but that the street was, by operation of law, extended from the former terminus over the newly made land to the water. Compare *Commissioners of Inland Fisheries v. Holyoke Water Power Co.*, 104 Mass. 446; s. c. 6 Am. Rep. 247.

¹ *Mills v. St. Clair County*, 8 How. 569; *Mohawk Bridge Co. v. Utica and S. R. R. Co.*, 6 Paige, 554; *Chenango Bridge Co. v. Binghamton Bridge Co.*, 27 N. Y. 87; s. c. 3 Wall. 51.

² Const. of United States, art. 4, § 2. See *ante*, pp. *15, *16.

³ Const. of United States, 14th Amendment.

⁴ Const. of United States, 14th Amendment. The fourteenth amendment is violated by a statute which allows the overseers of the poor to commit paupers and vagrants to the work-house without trial. *Portland v. Bangor*, 65 Me. 120; *Dunn v. Burleigh*, 62 Me. 24. It does not confer the right of suffrage upon females. *Van Valkenburgh v. Brown*, 43 Cal.

nities" is not very conclusively settled as yet, it appears to be conceded that the Constitution secures in each State to the citizens of all other States the right to remove to, and carry on business therein; the right by the usual modes to acquire and hold property, and to protect and defend the same in the law; the right to the usual remedies for the collection of debts and the enforcement of other personal rights, and the right to be exempt, in property and person, from taxes or burdens which the property, or persons, of citizens of the same State are not subject to.¹ To this extent, at least, discriminations could not be made by State laws against them. But it is unquestionable that many other rights and privileges may be made — as they usually are — to depend upon actual residence: such as the right to vote, to have the benefit of exemption laws, to take fish in the waters of the State, and the like. And the constitutional provisions are not violated by a statute which allows process by attachment against a debtor not a resident of the State, notwithstanding such process is not admissible against a resident.² The protection by due process of law has already been considered. It was not within the power of the States before the adoption of the fourteenth amendment, to deprive citizens of the equal protection of the laws; but there were servile classes not thus shielded, and when these were made freemen, there were some who disputed their claim to citizenship, and some State laws were in force which established discriminations against them. To settle doubts and preclude all such laws, the fourteenth amendment was adopted; and the same securities which one citizen may demand, all others are now entitled to.

Judicial Proceedings.

Individual citizens require protection against judicial action as well as against legislative; and perhaps the question, what con-

48; *Bradwell v. State*, 16 Wall. 130; *Minor v. Happersett*, 21 Wall. 162. See *ante*, p. *391, note.

Granting licenses for the sale of intoxicating drinks to males only, does not violate a constitutional provision which forbids the grant of special privileges or immunities. *Blair v. Kilpatrick*, 40 Ind. 315.

¹ *Corfield v. Coryell*, 4 Wash. 380; *Campbell v. Morris*, 3 H. & McH. 554; *Crandall v. State*, 10 Conn. 343; *Oliver v. Washington Mills*, 11 Allen, 281.

² *Campbell v. Morris*, 3 H. & McH. 554; *State v. Medbury*, 3 R. I. 141. And see generally the cases cited, *ante*, p. *16, note.

stitutes due process of law, arises as often when judicial action is in question as in any other cases. But it is not so difficult here to arrive at satisfactory conclusions, since the bounds of the judicial authority are much better defined than those of the legislative, and each case can generally be brought to the test of definite and well-settled rules of law.

The proceedings in any court are void if it wants jurisdiction of the case in which it has assumed to act. Jurisdiction is, *first*, of * the subject-matter; and, *second*, of the persons [* 398] whose rights are to be passed upon.¹

A court has jurisdiction of any subject-matter, if, by the law of its organization, it has authority to take cognizance of, try, and determine cases of that description. If it assumes to act in a case over which the law does not give it authority, the proceeding and judgment will be altogether void, and rights of property cannot be divested by means of them.

It is a maxim in the law that consent can never confer jurisdiction:² by which is meant that the consent of parties cannot empower a court to act upon subjects which are not submitted to its determination and judgment by the law. The law creates courts, and upon considerations of general public policy defines and limits their jurisdiction; and this can neither be enlarged nor restricted by the act of the parties.

Accordingly, where a court by law has no jurisdiction of the subject-matter of a controversy, a party whose rights are sought to be affected by it is at liberty to repudiate its proceedings and refuse to be bound by them, notwithstanding he may once have

¹ Bouvier defines jurisdiction thus: "Jurisdiction is a power constitutionally conferred upon a court, a single judge, or a magistrate, to take cognizance and decide causes according to law, and to carry their sentence into execution. The tract of land within which a court, judge, or magistrate has jurisdiction is called his *territory*; and his power in relation to his territory is called his *territorial jurisdiction*." 3 Bouv. Inst. 71.

² Coffin v. Tracy, 3 Caines, 129; Blin v. Campbell, 14 Johns. 432; Cuyler v. Rochester, 12 Wend. 165; Dudley v. Mayhew, 3 N. Y. 9; Preston v. Boston, 12 Pick. 7; Chapman v. Morgan, 2 Greene (Iowa), 374; Thompson v. Steamboat Morton, 2 Ohio, N. S. 26; Gilliland v. Administrator of Sellers, 2 Ohio, N. S. 223; Dicks v. Hatch, 10 Iowa, 380; Overstreet v. Brown, 4 McCord, 79; Green v. Collins, 6 Ired. 139; Bostwick v. Perkins, 4 Geo. 47; Georgia R. R., &c. v. Harris, 5 Geo. 527; State v. Bonney, 34 Me. 223; Little v. Fitts, 33 Ala. 343; Ginn v. Rogers, 4 Gilm. 131; Neill v. Keese, 5 Tex. 23; Ames v. Boland, 1 Minn. 365; Brady v. Richardson, 18 Ind. 1; White v. Buchanan, 6 Cold. 32.

consented to its action, either by voluntarily commencing the proceeding as plaintiff, or as defendant by appearing and pleading to the merits, or by any other formal or informal action. This right he may avail himself of at any stage of the case; and the maxim that requires one to move promptly who would take advantage of an irregularity does not apply here, since this is not mere irregular action, but a total want of power to act at all.

Consent is sometimes implied from failure to object; but [* 899] there can be no * waiver of rights by laches in a case where consent would be altogether nugatory.¹

In regard to private controversies, the law always encourages voluntary arrangements;² and the settlements which the parties may make for themselves, it allows to be made for them by arbitrators mutually chosen. But the courts of a country cannot have those controversies referred to them by the parties which the law-making power has seen fit to exclude from their cognizance. If the judges should sit to hear such controversies, they would not sit as a court; at the most they would be arbitrators only, and their action could not be sustained on that theory, unless it appeared that the parties had designed to make the judges their arbitrators, instead of expecting from them valid judicial action as an organized court. Even then the decision could not be binding as a judgment, but only as an award; and a mere neglect by either party to object the want of jurisdiction could not make the decision binding upon him either as a judgment or as an award. Still less could consent in a criminal case bind the defendant; since criminal charges are not the subject of arbitration, and any infliction of criminal punishment upon an individual, except in pursuance of the law of the land, is a wrong done to the State, whether the individual assented or not. Those cases in which it has been held that the constitutional right of trial by jury cannot be waived are strongly illustrative of the legal view of this subject.³

If the parties cannot confer jurisdiction upon a court by consent, neither can they by consent empower any individual other

¹ *Bostwick v. Perkins*, 4 Geo. 47; *Hill v. People*, 16 Mich. 351; *White v. Buchanan*, 6 Cold. 32.

² *Moore v. Detroit Locomotive Works*, 14 Mich. 266; *Coyner v. Lynde*, 10 Ind. 282.

³ *Brown v. State*, 8 Blackf. 561; *Work v. Ohio*, 2 Ohio, n. s. 296; *Cancemi v. People*, 18 N. Y. 128; *Smith v. People*, 9 Mich. 193; *Hill v. People*, 16 Mich. 351. See also *State v. Turner*, 1 Wright, 20.

than the judge of the court to exercise its powers. Judges are chosen in such manner as shall be provided by law ; and a stipulation by parties that any other person than the judge shall exercise his functions in their case would be nugatory, even though the judge should vacate his seat for the purposes of the hearing.¹

Sometimes jurisdiction of the subject-matter will depend upon considerations of locality, either of the thing in dispute or of the parties. At law certain actions are local, and others are transitory. * The first can only be tried where the prop- [* 400] erty is which is the subject of the controversy, or in respect to which the controversy has arisen. The United States courts take cognizance of certain causes by reason only of the fact that the parties are residents of different States or countries.² The question of jurisdiction in these cases is sometimes determined by the common law, and sometimes is matter of statutory regulation. But there is a class of cases in respect to which the courts of the several States of the Union are constantly being called upon to exercise authority, and in which, while the jurisdiction is conceded to rest on considerations of locality, there has not, unfortunately, at all times been entire harmony of decision as to what shall confer jurisdiction. We refer now to suits for divorce from the bonds of matrimony.

The courts of one State or country have no general authority to grant divorce, unless for some reason they have control over the particular marriage contract which is sought to be annulled. But what circumstance gives such control? Is it the fact that the marriage was entered into in such country or State? Or that the alleged breach of the marriage bond was within that jurisdiction? Or that the parties resided within it either at the time of the marriage or at the time of the offence? Or that the parties now reside in such State or country, though both marriage and offence may have taken place elsewhere? Or must marriage, offence, and residence, all or any two of them, combine to

¹ *Winchester v. Ayres*, 4 Greene (Iowa), 104.

² See a case where a judgment of a United States court was treated as of no force, because the court had not jurisdiction in respect to the plaintiff. *Vose v. Morton*, 4 Cush. 27. As to third persons, a judgment against an

individual may sometimes be treated as void, when he was not suable in that court or in that manner, notwithstanding he may have so submitted himself to the jurisdiction as to be personally bound. See *Georgia R. R., &c. v. Harris*, 5 Geo. 527; *Hinchman v. Town*, 10 Mich. 508.

confer the authority? These are questions which have frequently demanded the thoughtful attention of the courts, who have sought to establish a rule at once sound in principle, and that shall protect as far as possible the rights of the parties, one or the other of whom, unfortunately, under the operation of any rule which can be established, it will frequently be found has been the victim of gross injustice.

We conceive the true rule to be that the actual, *bona fide* residence of either husband or wife within a State will give [* 401] to that * State authority to determine the *status* of such party, and to pass upon any questions affecting his or her continuance in the marriage relation, irrespective of the locality of the marriage, or of any alleged offence; and that any such court in that State as the legislature may have authorized to take cognizance of the subject may lawfully pass upon such questions, and annul the marriage for any cause allowed by the local law. But if a party goes to a jurisdiction other than that of his domicile for the purpose of procuring a divorce, and has residence there for that purpose only, such residence is not *bona fide*, and does not confer upon the courts of that State or country jurisdiction over the marriage relation, and any decree they may assume to make would be void as to the other party.¹

¹ There are a number of cases in which this subject has been considered. In *Inhabitants of Hanover v. Turner*, 14 Mass. 227, instructions to a jury were sustained, that if they were satisfied the husband, who had been a citizen of Massachusetts, removed to Vermont merely for the purpose of procuring a divorce, and that the pretended cause for divorce arose, if it ever did arise, in Massachusetts, and that the wife was never within the jurisdiction of the court of Vermont, then and in such case the decree of divorce which the husband had obtained in Vermont must be considered as fraudulently obtained, and that it could not operate so as to dissolve the marriage between the parties. See also *Vischer v. Vischer*, 12 Barb. 640; and *McGiffert v. McGiffert*, 31 Barb. 69. In *Chase v.*

Chase, 6 Gray, 157, the same ruling was had as to a foreign divorce, notwithstanding the wife appeared in and defended the foreign suit. In *Clark v. Clark*, 8 N. H. 21, the court refused a divorce on the ground that the alleged cause of divorce (adultery), though committed within the State, was so committed while the parties had their domicile abroad. This decision was followed in *Greenlaw v. Greenlaw*, 12 N. H. 200. The court say: "If the defendant never had any domicile in this State, the libellant could not come here, bringing with her a cause of divorce over which this court had jurisdiction. If at the time of the [alleged offence] the domicile of the parties was in Maine, and the facts furnished no cause for a divorce there, she could not come here and allege those matters which had already

* But to render the jurisdiction of a court effectual in [* 402] any case, it is necessary that the thing in controversy, or

occurred, as a ground for a divorce under the laws of this State. Should she under such circumstances obtain a decree of divorce here, it must be regarded as a mere nullity elsewhere." In *Frary v. Frary*, 10 N. H. 61, importance was attached to the fact that the *marriage* took place in New Hampshire; and it was held that the court had jurisdiction of the wife's application for a divorce, notwithstanding the offence was committed in Vermont, but during the time of the wife's residence in New Hampshire. See also *Kimball v. Kimball*, 13 N. H. 225; *Bachelor v. Bachelor*, 14 N. H. 380; *Payson v. Payson*, 34 N. H. 518; *Hopkins v. Hopkins*, 35 N. H. 474. In *Wilcox v. Wilcox*, 10 Ind. 436, it was held that the residence of the libellant at the time of the application for a divorce was sufficient to confer jurisdiction, and a decree dismissing the bill because the cause for divorce arose out of the State was reversed. And see *Tolen v. Tolen*, 2 Blackf. 407. See also *Jackson v. Jackson*, 1 Johns. 424; *Barber v. Root*, 10 Mass. 263; *Borden v. Fitch*, 15 Johns. 121; *Bradshaw v. Heath*, 13 Wend. 407. In any of these cases the question of actual residence will be open to inquiry wherever it becomes important, notwithstanding the record of proceedings is in due form, and contains the affidavit of residence required by the practice. *Leith v. Leith*, 39 N. H. 20. And see *McGiffert v. McGiffert*, 31 Barb. 69; *Todd v. Kerr*, 42 Barb. 317; *Hoffman v. Hoffman*, 46 N. Y. 30; *People v. Dawell*, 25 Mich. 247. The Pennsylvania cases agree with those of New Hampshire, in holding that a divorce should not be granted unless the cause alleged occurred while the complainant had domicile within the State. *Dorsey v. Dorsey*, 7 Watts,

349; *Hollister v. Hollister*, 6 Penn. St. 449; *McDermott's Appeal*, 8 W. & S. 251. And they hold also that the injured party in the marriage relation must seek redress in the forum of the defendant, unless where such defendant has removed from what was before the common domicile of both. *Calvin v. Reed*, 35 Penn. St. 375; *Elder v. Reel*, 62 Penn. St. 308; s. c. 1 Am. Rep. 414. For cases supporting to a greater or less extent the doctrine stated in the text, see *Harding v. Alden*, 9 Greenl. 140; *Ditson v. Ditson*, 4 R. I. 87; *Pawling v. Bird's Ex'rs*, 13 Johns. 192; *Kerr v. Kerr*, 41 N. Y. 272; *Harrison v. Harrison*, 19 Ala. 499; *Thompson v. State*, 28 Ala. 12; *Cooper v. Cooper*, 7 Ohio, 594; *Mansfield v. McIntyre*, 10 Ohio, 28; *Smith v. Smith*, 4 Greene (Iowa), 266; *Yates v. Yates*, 2 Beasley, 280; *Maguire v. Maguire*, 7 Dana, 181; *Waltz v. Waltz*, 18 Ind. 449; *Hull v. Hull*, 2 Strob. Eq. 174; *Manley v. Manley*, 4 Chand. 97; *Hubbell v. Hubbell*, 3 Wis. 662; *Gleason v. Gleason*, 4 Wis. 64; *Hare v. Hare*, 15 Tex. 355. And see Story, *Conf. Laws*, § 230 *a*; Bishop on Mar. and Div. (1st ed.) § 727 *et seq.*; *Ibid.* (4th ed.) Vol. II. § 155 *et seq.* The recent cases of *Hoffman v. Hoffman*, 46 N. Y. 30; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 299; *Elder v. Reel*, 62 Penn. St. 308; s. c. 1 Am. Rep. 414; and *People v. Dawell*, 25 Mich. 247, are very explicit in declaring that where neither party is domiciled within a particular State, its courts can have no jurisdiction in respect to their marital *status*, and any decree of divorce made therein must be nugatory. A number of the cases cited hold that the wife may have a domicile separate from the husband, and may therefore be entitled to a divorce, though the husband never resided in the State. These

the parties interested, be subjected to the process of the court. Certain cases are said to proceed *in rem*, because they take notice rather of the thing in controversy than of the persons concerned; and the process is served upon that which is the object [* 403] of the suit, without *specially noticing the interested parties; while in other cases the parties themselves are brought before the court by process. Of the first class admiralty proceedings are an illustration; the court acquiring jurisdiction by seizing the vessel or other thing to which the controversy relates. In cases within this class, notice to all concerned is required to be given, either personally or by some species of publication or proclamation; and if not given, the court which had jurisdiction of the property will have none to render judgment.¹ Suits at the common law, however, proceed against the parties whose interests are sought to be affected; and only those persons are concluded by the adjudication who are served with process, or who voluntarily appear.² Some cases also partake of the nature

cases proceed upon the theory that, although in general the domicile of the husband is the domicile of the wife, yet that if he be guilty of such act or dereliction of duty in the relation as entitles her to have it partially or wholly dissolved, she is at liberty to establish a separate jurisdictional domicile of her own. *Ditson v. Ditson*, 4 R. L. 87; *Harding v. Alden*, 9 Greenl. 140; *Maguire v. Maguire*, 7 Dana, 181; *Hollister v. Hollister*, 6 Penn. St. 449. The doctrine in New York seems to be, that a divorce obtained in another State, without personal service of process or appearance of the defendant, is absolutely void. *Vischer v. Vischer*, 12 Barb. 640; *McGiffert v. McGiffert*, 31 Barb. 69; *Todd v. Kerr*, 42 Barb. 317. See *Cox v. Cox*, 19 Ohio, N. S. 502; S. C. 2 Am. Rep. 415. An appearance by defendant afterwards for the purposes of a motion to set aside the decree, which motion was defeated on technical grounds, will not affect the question. *Hoffman v. Hoffman*, 46 N. Y. 30; S. C. 7 Am. Rep. 299.

Upon the whole subject of juris-

diction in divorce suits, no case in the books is more full and satisfactory than that of *Ditson v. Ditson*, *supra*, which reviews and comments upon a number of the cases cited, and particularly upon the Massachusetts cases of *Barber v. Root*, 10 Mass. 265; *Inhabitants of Hanover v. Turner*, 14 Mass. 227; *Harteau v. Harteau*, 14 Pick. 181; and *Lyon v. Lyon*, 2 Gray, 367. The divorce of one party divorces both. *Cooper v. Cooper*, 7 Ohio, 594. And will leave both at liberty to enter into new marriage relations, unless the local statute expressly forbids the guilty party from contracting a second marriage. See *Commonwealth v. Putnam*, 1 Pick. 136; *Baker v. People*, 2 Hill, 325.

¹ *Doughty v. Hope*, 3 Denio, 594. See *Matter of Empire City Bank*, 18 N. Y. 199; *Nations v. Johnson*, 24 How. 204, 205; *Blackwell on Tax Titles*, 213.

² *Jack v. Thompson*, 41 Miss. 49. As to the right of an attorney to notice of proceedings to disbar him, see notes to pp. *337 and *404. "Notice of some kind is the vital breath

both of proceedings *in rem* and of personal actions, since, although they proceed by seizing property, they also contemplate the service of process on defendant parties. Of this class are the proceedings by foreign attachment, in which the property of a non-resident or concealed debtor is seized and retained by the officer as security for the satisfaction of any judgment that may be recovered against him, but at the same time process is issued to be served upon the defendant, and which must be served, or some substitute for service had before judgment can be rendered.

In such cases, as well as in divorce suits, it will often happen that the party proceeded against cannot be found in the State, and personal service upon him is therefore impossible, unless it is allowable to make it wherever he may be found abroad. But any such service would be ineffectual. No State has authority to invade the jurisdiction of another, and by service of process compel parties there resident or being to submit their controversies to the determination of its courts; and those courts will consequently be sometimes unable to enforce a jurisdiction which the State possesses in respect to the subjects within its limits, unless * a substituted service is admissible. A substituted [* 404] service is provided by statute for many such cases; generally in the form of a notice, published in the public journals, or posted, as the statute may direct; the mode being chosen with a view to bring it home, if possible, to the knowledge of the party

that animates judicial jurisdiction over the person. It is the primary element of the application of the judicatory power. It is of the essence of a cause. Without it there cannot be parties, and without parties there may be the form of a sentence, but no judgment obligating the person." See *Bragg's Case*, 11 Coke, 99 a; *Rex v. Chancellor of Cambridge*, 1 Str. 567; *Cooper v. Board of Works*, 14 C. B. n. s. 194; *Meade v. Deputy Marshal*, 1 Brock. 324; *Goetcheus v. Mathewson*, 61 N. Y. 420; *Underwood v. McVeigh*, 23 Grat. 409; *McVeigh v. United States*, 11 Wall. 259; *Littleton v. Richardson*, 34 N. H. 179; *Black v. Black*, 4 Bradf. Sur. Rep. 205.

Where, however, a statute provides for the taking of a certain security, and authorizes judgment to be rendered upon it on motion, without process, the party entering into the security must be understood to assent to the condition, and to waive process and consent to judgment. *Lewis v. Garrett's Adm'r*, 6 Miss. 434; *People v. Van Eps*, 4 Wend. 390; *Chappee v. Thomas*, 5 Mich. 53; *Gildersleeve v. People*, 10 Barb. 35; *People v. Lott*, 21 Barb. 130; *Pratt v. Donovan*, 10 Wis. 378; *Murray v. Hoboken Land Co.*, 18 How. 272; *Philadelphia v. Commonwealth*, 52 Penn. St. 451; *Whitehurst v. Coleen*, 53 Ill. 247.

to be affected, and to give him an opportunity to appear and defend. The right of the legislature to prescribe such notice, and to give it effect as process, rests upon the necessity of the case, and has been long recognized and acted upon.¹

But such notice is restricted in its legal effect, and cannot be made available for all purposes. It will enable the court to give effect to the proceeding so far as it is one *in rem*, but when the *res* is disposed of, the authority of the court ceases. The statute may give it effect so far as the subject-matter of the proceeding is within the limits, and therefore under the control, of the State; but the notice cannot be made to stand in the place of process, so as to subject the defendant to a valid judgment against him personally. In attachment proceedings, the published notice may be sufficient to enable the plaintiff to obtain a judgment which he can enforce by sale of the property attached, but for any other purpose such judgment would be ineffectual. The defendant could not be followed into another State or country, and there have recovery against him upon the judgment as an established demand. The fact that process was not personally served is a conclusive objection to the judgment as a personal claim, unless the defendant caused his appearance to be entered in the attachment proceedings.² Where a party has property in a State, and

¹ "It may be admitted that a statute which authorized any debt or damages to be adjudged against a person upon purely *ex parte* proceedings, without pretence of notice, or any provision for defending, would be a violation of the constitution, and void; but when the legislature has provided a kind of notice by which it is reasonably probable that the party proceeded against will be apprised of what is going on against him, and an opportunity is afforded him to defend, I am of opinion that the courts have not the power to pronounce the proceedings illegal." *Denio*, J., in *Matter of Empire City Bank*, 18 N. Y. 200. See also, per *Morgan*, J., in *Rockwell v. Nearing*, 35 N. Y. 314; *Nations v. Johnson*, 24 How. 195; *Beard v. Beard*, 21 Ind. 321; *Mason v. Messenger*, 17 Iowa, 261; *Cupp v.*

Commissioners of Seneca Co., 19 Ohio, N. S. 173; *Campbell v. Evans*, 45 N. Y. 356; *Happy v. Mosher*, 48 N. Y. 317. In *Burnam v. Commonwealth*, 1 Duv. 210, a personal judgment against the absconding officers of the provisional government was sustained. But in the case of constructive notice, if the party appears, he has a right to be heard, and this cannot be denied him, even though he be a rebel. *McVeigh v. United States*, 11 Wall. 259, 267.

² *Pawling v. Willson*, 13 Johns. 192; *Heirs of Holman v. Bank of Norfolk*, 12 Ala. 369; *Curtis v. Gibbs*, 1 Penn. 399; *Miller's Ex'r v. Miller*, 1 Bailey, 242; *Cone v. Cotton*, 2 Blackf. 82; *Kilburn v. Woodworth*, 5 Johns. 37; *Robinson v. Ward's Ex'r*, 8 Johns. 86; *Hall v. Williams*, 6 Pick. 232; *Bartlet v. Knight*, 1

* resides elsewhere, his property is justly subject to all [* 405] valid claims that may exist against him there; but beyond this, due process of law would require appearance or personal service before the defendant could be personally bound by any judgment rendered.

The same rule applies in divorce cases. The courts of the State where the complaining party resides have jurisdiction of the subject-matter; and if the other party is a non-resident, they must be authorized to proceed without personal service of process. The publication which is permitted by the statute is sufficient to justify a decree in these cases changing the *status* of the complaining party, and thereby terminating the marriage;¹ and it might be sufficient also to empower the court to pass upon the question of the custody and control of the children of the marriage, if they were then within its jurisdiction. But a decree on this subject could only be absolutely binding on the parties while the children remained within the jurisdiction; if they acquire a domicile in another State or country, the judicial tribunals of that State or country would have authority to determine the question of their guardianship there.²

Mass. 401; St. Albans v. Bush, 4 Vt. 58; Fenton v. Garlick, 6 Johns. 194; Bissell v. Briggs, 9 Mass. 462; Denison v. Hyde, 6 Conn. 508; Aldrich v. Kinney, 4 Conn. 380; Hoxie v. Wright, 2 Vt. 263; Newell v. Newton, 10 Pick. 470; Starbuck v. Murray, 5 Wend. 161; Armstrong v. Harshaw, 1 Dev. 188; Bradshaw v. Heath, 13 Wend. 407; Bates v. Delavan, 5 Paige, 299; Webster v. Reid, 11 How. 460; Gleason v. Dodd, 4 Met. 333; Green v. Custard, 23 How. 486. In *Ex parte Heyfron*, 7 How. (Miss.) 127, it was held that an attorney could not be stricken from the rolls without notice of the proceeding, and opportunity to be heard. And see *ante*, p. *337, n. Leaving notice with one's family is not equivalent to personal service. Rape v. Heaton, 9 Wis. 329. And see *Bimeler v. Dawson*, 4 Scam. 536.

¹ Hull v. Hull, 2 Strob. Eq. 174; Manley v. Manley, 4 Chand. 97; Hubbell v. Hubbell, 3 Wis. 662; Mans-

field v. McIntyre, 10 Ohio, 28; Ditson v. Ditson, 4 R. I. 97; Harrison v. Harrison, 19 Ala. 499; Thompson v. State, 28 Ala. 12; Harding v. Alden, 9 Greenl. 140; Maguire v. Maguire, 7 Dana, 181; Todd v. Kerr, 42 Barb. 317. It is immaterial in these cases whether notice was actually brought home to the defendant or not. And see *Heirs of Holman v. Bank of Norfolk*, 12 Ala. 369.

² This must be so on general principles, as the appointment of guardian for minors is of local force only. See *Monell v. Dickey*, 1 Johns. Ch. 156; *Woodworth v. Spring*, 4 Allen, 321; *Potter v. Hiscox*, 30 Conn. 508; *Kraft v. Wickey*, 4 G. & J. 322. The case of *Townsend v. Kendall*, 4 Minn. 412, appears to be *contra*, but some reliance is placed by the court on the statute of the State which allows the foreign appointment to be recognized for the purposes of a sale of the real estate of a ward.

[* 406] * But in divorce cases, no more than in any other, can the court make a decree for the payment of money by a defendant not served with process, and not appearing in the case, which shall be binding upon him personally. It must follow, in such a case, that the wife, when complainant, cannot obtain a valid decree for alimony, nor a valid judgment for costs. If the defendant had property within the State, it would be competent to provide by law for the seizure and appropriation of such property, under the decree of the court, to the use of the complainant; but the legal tribunals elsewhere would not recognize a decree for alimony or for costs not based on personal service or appearance. The remedy of the complainant must generally, in these cases, be confined to a dissolution of the marriage, with the incidental benefits springing therefrom, and to an order for the custody of the children, if within the State.¹

When the question is raised whether the proceedings of a court may not be void for want of jurisdiction, it will sometimes be important to note the grade of the court and the extent of its authority. Some courts are of general jurisdiction, by which is meant that their authority extends to a great variety of matters; while others are only of special and limited jurisdiction, by which it is understood that they have authority extending only to certain specified cases. The want of jurisdiction is equally fatal in the proceedings of each; but different rules prevail in showing it. It is not to be assumed that a court of general jurisdiction has in any case proceeded to adjudge upon matters over which it had no authority; and its jurisdiction is to be presumed, whether there are recitals in its records to show it or not. On the other hand, no such intendment is made in favor of the judgment of a court of limited jurisdiction, but the recitals contained in the minutes of proceedings must be sufficient to show that the case was one which the law permitted the court to take cognizance

¹ See *Jackson v. Jackson*, 1 Johns. 424; *Harding v. Alden*, 9 Greenl. 140; *Holmes v. Holmes*, 4 Barb. 295; *Crane v. Meginnis*, 1 Gill & J. 463; *Maguire v. Maguire*, 7 Dana, 181; *Townsend v. Griffin*, 4 Harr. 440. In *Beard v. Beard*, 21 Ind. 321, *Perkins, J.*, after a learned and somewhat elaborate examination of the subject, expresses the opinion that the State may permit a personal judgment for alimony in the case of a resident defendant, on service by publication only, though he conceded that there would be no such power in the case of non-residents.

of, and that the parties were subjected to its jurisdiction by proper process.¹

* There is also another difference between these two [* 407] classes of tribunals in this, that the jurisdiction of the one may be disproved under circumstances where it would not be allowed in the case of the other. A record is not commonly suffered to be contradicted by parol evidence; but wherever a fact showing want of jurisdiction in a court of general jurisdiction can be proved without contradicting its recitals, it is allowable to do so, and thus defeat its effect.² But in the case of a court of special and limited authority, it is permitted to go still further, and to show a want of jurisdiction even in opposition to the recitals contained in the record.³ This we conceive to be the general rule, though there are apparent exceptions of those cases where the jurisdiction may be said to depend upon the existence of a certain state of facts, which must be passed upon by the courts themselves, and in respect to which the decision of the court once rendered, if there was any evidence whatever on which to base it, must be held final and conclusive in all collateral inquiries, notwithstanding it may have erred in its conclusions.⁴

¹ See *Dakin v. Hudson*, 6 Cow. 221; *Cleveland v. Rogers*, 6 Wend. 438; *People v. Koeber*, 7 Hill, 39; *Sheldon v. Wright*, 1 Seld. 511; *Clark v. Holmes*, 1 Doug. (Mich.) 390; *Cooper v. Sunderland*, 3 Iowa, 114; *Wall v. Trumbull*, 16 Mich. 228; *Denning v. Corwin*, 11 Wend. 647; *Bridge v. Ford*, 6 Mass. 641; *Smith v. Rice*, 11 Mass. 511; *Barrett v. Crane*, 16 Vt. 246; *Teft v. Griffin*, 5 Geo. 185; *Jennings v. Stafford*, 1 Ired. 404; *Hershaw v. Taylor*, 3 Jones, 513; *Perrine v. Farr*, 2 Zab. 356; *State v. Metzger*, 26 Mo. 65.

² See this subject considered at some length in *Wilcox v. Kassick*, 2 Mich. 165. And see *Rape v. Heaton*, 9 Wis. 329; *Bimelar v. Dawson*, 4 Scam. 536; *Webster v. Reid*, 11 How. 437.

³ *Sheldon v. Wright*, 5 N. Y. 497; *Dyckman v. Mayor, &c. of N. Y.*, 5 N. Y. 434; *Clark v. Holmes*, 1 Doug. (Mich.) 390; *Cooper v. Sunderland*,

3 Iowa, 114; *Sears v. Terry*, 26 Conn. 273; *Brown v. Foster*, 6 R. I. 564; *Fawcett v. Fowlis*, 1 Man. & R. 102. But see *Facey v. Fuller*, 13 Mich. 527, where it was held that the entry in the docket of a justice that the parties appeared and proceeded to trial was conclusive. And see *Selin v. Snyder*, 7 S. & R. 72.

⁴ *Britain v. Kinnard*, 1 B. & B. 432. Conviction under the Bumboat Act. The record was fair on its face, but it was insisted that the vessel in question was not a "boat" within the intent of the act. *Dallas*, Ch. J.: "The general principle applicable to cases of this description is perfectly clear: it is established by all the ancient, and recognized by all the modern decisions; and the principle is, that a conviction by a magistrate, who has jurisdiction over the subject-matter, is, if no defects appear on the face of it, conclusive evidence of the facts stated in it. Such being

[* 408] * When it is once made to appear that a court has jurisdiction both of the subject-matter and of the parties,

the principle, what are the facts of the present case? If the subject-matter in the present case were a boat, it is agreed that the boat would be forfeited; and the conviction stated it to be a boat. But it is said that in order to give the magistrate jurisdiction, the subject-matter of his conviction must be a boat; and that it is competent to the party to impeach the conviction by showing that it was not a boat. I agree, that if he had not jurisdiction, the conviction signifies nothing. Had he then jurisdiction in this case? By the act of Parliament he is empowered to search for and seize gunpowder in any boat on the river Thames. Now, allowing, for the sake of argument, that 'boat' is a word of technical meaning, and somewhat different from a vessel, still, it was a matter of fact to be made out before the magistrate, and on which he was to draw his own conclusion. But it is said that a jurisdiction limited as to person, place, and subject-matter is stinted in its nature, and cannot be lawfully exceeded. I agree: but upon the inquiry before the magistrate, does not the person form a question to be decided upon the evidence? Does not the place, does not the subject-matter, form such a question? The possession of a boat, therefore, with gunpowder on board, is part of the offence charged; and how could the magistrate decide, but by examining evidence in proof of what was alleged? The magistrate, it is urged, could not give himself jurisdiction by finding that to be a fact which did not exist. But he is bound to inquire as to the fact, and when he has inquired, his conviction is conclusive of it. The magistrates have inquired in the present instance, and they find the subject of conviction to be a boat. Much

has been said about the danger of magistrates giving themselves jurisdiction; and extreme cases have been put, as of a magistrate seizing a ship of seventy-four guns, and calling it a boat. Suppose such a thing done, the conviction is still conclusive, and we cannot look out of it. It is urged that the party is without remedy; and so he is, without civil remedy, in this and many other cases; his remedy is by proceeding criminally; and if the decision were so gross as to call a ship of seventy-four guns a boat, it would be good ground for a criminal proceeding. Formerly the rule was to intend every thing against a stinted jurisdiction: that is not the rule now; and nothing is to be intended but what is fair and reasonable, and it is reasonable to intend that magistrates will do what is right." *Richardson, J.*, in the same case, states the real point very clearly: "Whether the vessel in question were a boat or no was a fact on which the magistrate was to decide; and the fallacy lies in assuming that the fact which the magistrate has to decide is that which constitutes his jurisdiction. If a fact decided as this has been might be questioned in a civil suit, the magistrate would never be safe in his jurisdiction. Suppose the case for a conviction under the game laws of having partridges in possession; could the magistrate, in an action of trespass, be called on to show that the bird in question was really a partridge; and yet it might as well be urged, in that case, that the magistrate had no jurisdiction unless the bird were a partridge, as it may be urged in the present case that he has none unless the machine be a boat. So in the case of a conviction for keeping dogs for the destruction of game without being duly qualified to do so; after

the judgment which *it pronounces must be held con- [* 409] clusive and binding upon the parties thereto and their privies, notwithstanding the court may have proceeded irregularly, or erred in its application of the law to the case before it. It is a general rule that irregularities in the course of judicial proceedings do not render them void.¹ An irregularity may be defined as the failure to observe that particular course of proceeding which, conformably with the practice of the court, ought to have been observed in the case;² and if a party claims to be aggrieved by this, he must apply to the court in which the suit is pending to set aside the proceedings, or to give him such other redress as he thinks himself entitled to; or he must take steps to have the judgment reversed by removing the case for review to an appellate court, if any such there be. Wherever the question of the validity of the proceedings arises in any collateral suit, he will be held bound by them to the same extent as if in all respects the court had proceeded according to law. An irregularity cannot be taken advantage of collaterally; that is to say, in any other suit than that in which the irregularity occurs, or on appeal or process in error therefrom. And even in the same proceeding an irregularity may be waived, and will commonly be held to be waived if the party entitled to complain of it

the conviction had found that the offender kept a dog of that description, could he, in a civil action, be allowed to dispute the truth of the conviction? In a question like the present we are not to look at the inconvenience, but at the law; but surely if the magistrate acts *bona fide*, and comes to his conclusion as to matters of fact according to the best of his judgment, it would be highly unjust if he were to have to defend himself in a civil action; and the more so, as he might have been compelled by a *mandamus* to proceed on the investigation. Upon the general principle, therefore, that where the magistrate has jurisdiction his conviction is conclusive evidence of the facts stated in it, I think this rule must be discharged." See also *Basten v. Carew*, 3 B. & C. 648; *Fawcett*

v. Fowlis, 7 B. & C. 394; *Ashcroft v. Bourne*, 3 B. & Ad. 684; *Mather v. Hodd*, 8 Johns. 44; *Mackaboy v. Commonwealth*, 2 Virg. Cas. 268; *Ex parte Kellogg*, 6 Vt. 509; *State v. Scott*, 1 Bailey, 294; *Facey v. Fuller*, 13 Mich. 527; *Wall v. Trumbull*, 16 Mich. 228; *Sheldon v. Wright*, 5 N. Y. 512; *Wanzer v. Howland*, 10 Wis. 16; *Freeman on Judgments*, § 523, and cases cited.

¹ *Ex parte Kellogg*, 6 Vt. 509; *Edgerton v. Hart*, 8 Vt. 208; *Carter v. Walker*, 2 Ohio, n. s. 339; *Freeman on Judgments*, § 135.

² "The doing or not doing that in the conduct of a suit at law, which, conformably to the practice of the court, ought or ought not to be done." Bouv. Law Dic. See *Dick v. McLaurin*, 63 N. C. 185.

shall take any subsequent step in the case inconsistent with an intent on his part to take advantage of it.¹

We have thus briefly indicated the cases in which judicial action may be treated as void because not in accordance [* 410] with the *law of the land. The design of the present work does not permit an enlarged discussion of the topics which suggest themselves in this connection, and which, however interesting and important, do not specially pertain to the subject of constitutional law.

But a party in any case has a right to demand that the judgment of the court be given upon his suit, and he cannot be bound by a delegated exercise of judicial power, whether the delegation be by the courts or by legislative act devolving judicial duties on ministerial officers.² Proceedings in any such case would be void; but they must be carefully distinguished from those cases in which the court has itself acted, though irregularly. All the State constitutions preserve the right of trial by jury, for civil as well as for criminal cases, with such exceptions as are specified, and which for the most part consist in such cases as are of small consequence, and are triable in inferior courts. The constitutional provisions do not extend the right; they only secure it in the cases in which it was a matter of right before.³ But in doing

¹ *Robinson v. West*, 1 Sandf. 19; *Malone v. Clark*, 2 Hill, 657; *Wood v. Randall*, 5 Hill, 285; *Baker v. Kerr*, 13 Iowa, 384; *Loomis v. Wadhams*, 8 Gray, 557; *Warren v. Glynn*, 37 N. H. 340. A strong instance of waiver is where, on appeal from a court having no jurisdiction of the subject-matter to a court having general jurisdiction, the parties going to trial without objection are held bound by the judgment. *Randolph Co. v. Ralls*, 18 Ill. 29; *Wells v. Scott*, 4 Mich. 347; *Tower v. Lamb*, 6 Mich. 362. In *Hoffman v. Locke*, 19 Penn. St. 57, objection was taken on constitutional grounds to a statute which allowed judgment to be entered up for the plaintiff in certain cases, if the defendant failed to make and file an affidavit of merits; but the court sustained it.

² *Hall v. Marks*, 34 Ill. 363; *Chandler v. Nash*, 5 Mich. 409. As to the right to send civil causes to a referee for hearing, see *King v. Hopkins*, 57 N. H. 334; *St. Paul, &c. R. R. Co. v. Gardner*, 19 Minn. 132; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 334. For the distinction between judicial and ministerial acts, see *Flournoy v. Jeffersonville*, 17 Ind. 173.

³ *Backus v. Lebanon*, 11 N. H. 19; *Opinions of Judges*, 41 N. H. 551; *Dane Co. v. Dunning*, 20 Wis. 210; *Stilwell v. Kellogg*, 14 Wis. 461; *Mead v. Walker*, 17 Wis. 189; *Commonwealth v. Seabrook*, 2 Strob. 560; *Tabor v. Cook*, 15 Mich. 322; *Lake Erie, &c. R. R. Co. v. Heath*, 9 Ind. 558; *Byers v. Commonwealth*, 42 Penn. St. 89; *State v. Peterson*, 41 Vt. 504; *Buffalo, &c. R. R. Co. v. Burket*, 26 Tex. 588; *Sands v. Kim-*

this, they preserve the historical jury of twelve men,¹ with all its incidents, unless a contrary purpose clearly appears. The party is therefore entitled to examine into the qualifications and impartiality of jurors;² and to have the proceedings public;³ and no conditions can be imposed upon the exercise of the right that shall impair its value and usefulness.⁴ It has been held, however, in many cases, that it is competent to deny to parties the privilege of a trial in a court of first instance, provided the right is allowed on appeal.⁵ It is undoubtedly competent to create new tribunals without common-law powers, and to authorize them to proceed without a jury; but a change in the forms of action will not authorize submitting common-law rights to a tribunal in which no jury is allowed.⁶ In any case, we suppose a failure to award a jury on proper demand would be an irregularity merely, rendering the proceedings liable to reversal, but not making them void.

bark, 27 N. Y. 147; *Howell v. Fry*, 19 Ohio, N. S. 556; *Guile v. Brown*, 38 Conn. 237; *Howe v. Plainfield*, 37 N. J. 143; *Commissioners v. Morrison*, 22 Minn. 178.

¹ See *ante*, p. *319. And see the general examination of the subject historically in *Hagany v. Cohnen*, 29 Ohio, N. S. 82; and *Copp v. Henniker*, 55 N. H. 179.

² *Palmore v. State*, 29 Ark. 248; *Paul v. Detroit*, 32 Mich. 108.

³ *Watertown Bank, &c. v. Mix*, 51 N. Y. 558.

⁴ *Greene v. Briggs*, 1 Curt. C. C. 311; *Lincoln v. Smith*, 27 Vt. 328; *Norristown, &c. Co. v. Burket*, 26 Ind. 53; *State v. Gurney*, 37 Me. 156; *Copp v. Henniker*, 55 N. H. 179. It is not inadmissible, however, to require of a party demanding a jury that he shall pay the jury fee. *Randall v. Kehlror*, 60 Me. 37.

⁵ *Emerick v. Harris*, 1 Binn. 416; *Biddle v. Commonwealth*, 13 S. & R. 405; *McDonald v. Schell*, 6 S. & R. 240; *Keddie v. Moore*, 2 Murph. 41; *Wilson v. Simonton*, 1 Hawks, 482; *Monford v. Barney*, 8 Yerg. 444; *Beers v. Beers*, 4 Conn. 535; *State v. Bren-*

nan's Liquors, 25 Conn. 278; *Curtis v. Gill*, 34 Conn. 49; *Reckner v. Warner*, 22 Ohio, N. S. 275; *Jones v. Robbins*, 8 Gray, 329; *Hapgood v. Doherty*, 8 Gray, 374; *Flint River, &c. Co. v. Foster*, 5 Geo. 208; *Murford v. Barnes*, 8 Geo. 444; *State v. Beneke*, 9 Iowa, 203; *Lincoln v. Smith*, 27 Vt. 328, 360; *Steuart v. Baltimore*, 7 Md. 500; *Commonwealth v. Whitney*, 108 Mass. 6. But that this could not be admissible in criminal cases was held in *Matter of Dana*, 7 Benedict, 1, by Judge *Blatchford*, who very sensibly remarks, "In my judgment the accused is entitled, not to be first convicted by a court, and then to be acquitted by a jury, but to be convicted or acquitted in the first instance by a jury."

⁶ See *Rhines v. Clark*, 51 Penn. St. 96. Compare *Haines v. Levin*, 51 Penn. St. 412; *Haines' Appeal*, 73 Penn. St. 169. Whether jury trial is of right in *quo warranto* cases, see *State v. Allen*, 5 Kan. 213; *State v. Johnson*, 26 Ark. 281; *State v. Vail*, 53 Mo. 97; *People v. Cicott*, 16 Mich. 283.

There is also a maxim of law regarding judicial action which may have an important bearing upon the constitutional validity of judgments in some cases. No one ought to be a judge in his own cause; and so inflexible and so manifestly just is this rule, that Lord *Coke* has laid it down that “even an act of Parliament made against natural equity, as to make a man a judge in his own case, is void in itself; for *jura naturæ sunt immutabilia*, and they are *leges legum*.”¹

[*411] * This maxim applies in all cases where judicial functions are to be exercised, and excludes all who are interested, however remotely, from taking part in their exercise. It is not left to the discretion of a judge, or to his sense of decency, to decide whether he shall act or not; all his powers are subject to this absolute limitation; and when his own rights are in question, he has no authority to determine the cause.² Nor is it essential that the judge be a party named in the record; if the suit is brought or defended in his interest, or if he is a corporator in a corporation which is a party, or which will be benefited or damnified by the judgment, he is equally excluded as if he were the party named.³ Accordingly, where the Lord Chancellor, who was a shareholder in a company in whose favor the Vice-Chancellor had rendered a decree, affirmed this decree, the House of Lords reversed the decree on this ground, Lord *Campbell* observing: “It is of the last importance that the maxim that ‘no man is to be a judge in his own cause’ should be held sacred. And that is not to be confined to a cause in which he is a party, but applies to a cause in which he has an interest.” “We have again and again set aside proceedings in inferior tribunals, because an individual who had an interest in a cause took

¹ Co. Lit. § 212. See *Day v. Savadge*, Hobart, 85. We should not venture to predict, however, that even in a case of this kind, if one could be imagined to exist, the courts would declare the act of Parliament void; though they would never find such an intent in the statute, if any other could possibly be made consistent with the words.

² *Washington Insurance Co. v. Price*, Hopk. Ch. 2; *Sigourney v. Sibley*, 21 Pick. 191; *Freeman on Judgments*, § 144.

³ *Washington Insurance Co. v. Price*, Hopk. Ch. 2; *Dimes v. Proprietors of Grand Junction Canal*, 3 House of Lords Cases, 759; *Pearce v. Atwood*, 13 Mass. 340; *Peck v. Freeholders of Essex*, 20 N. J. 457; *Commonwealth v. McLane*, 4 Gray, 427; *Dively v. Cedar Rapids*, 21 Iowa, 565; *Clark v. Lamb*, 2 Allen, 396; *Stockwell v. White Lake*, 22 Mich. 341; *Petition of New Boston*, 49 N. H. 328.

a part in the decision. And it will have a most salutary effect on these tribunals, when it is known that this high court of last resort, in a case in which the Lord Chancellor of England had an interest, considered that his decree was on that account a decree not according to law, and should be set aside. This will be a lesson to all inferior tribunals to take care, not only that in their decrees they are not influenced by their personal interest, but to avoid the appearance of laboring under such an influence.”¹

It is matter of some interest to know whether the legislatures of the American States can set aside this maxim of the common law, and by express enactment permit one to act judicially when *interested in the controversy. The maxim itself, [* 412] it is said, in some cases, does not apply where, from necessity, the judge must proceed in the case, there being no other tribunal authorized to act;² but we prefer the opinion of Chancellor *Sandford* of New York, that in such a case it belongs to the power which created such a court to provide another in which this judge may be a party; and whether another tribunal is established or not, he at least is not intrusted with authority to determine his own rights, or his own wrongs.³

It has been held that where the interest was that of corporator in a municipal corporation, the legislature might provide that it should constitute no disqualification where the corporation was a party. But the ground of this ruling appears to be, that the interest is so remote, trifling, and insignificant, that it may fairly be supposed to be incapable of affecting the judgment or of influencing the conduct of an individual.⁴ And where penalties are imposed, to be recovered only in a municipal court, the judges or jurors in which would be interested as corporators in the recovery, the law providing for such recovery must be regarded as precluding the objection of interest.⁵ And it is very

¹ *Dimes v. Proprietors of Grand Junction Canal*, 3 House of Lords Cases, 759.

² *Ranger v. Great Western R.*, 5 House of Lords Cases, 88; *Stewart v. Mechanics' and Farmers' Bank*, 19 Johns. 501.

³ *Washington Insurance Co. v. Price*, Hopk. Ch. 2. This subject was considered in *Hall v. Thayer*, 105 Mass. 221, and an appointment

by a judge of probate of his wife's brother as administrator of an estate of which her father was a principal creditor was held void. And see *People v. Gies*, 25 Mich. 83.

⁴ *Commonwealth v. Reed*, 1 Gray, 475.

⁵ *Commonwealth v. Ryan*, 5 Mass. 90; *Hill v. Wells*, 6 Pick. 104; *Commonwealth v. Emery*, 11 Cush. 406.

common, in a certain class of cases, for the law to provide that certain township and county officers shall audit their own accounts for services rendered the public; but in such case there is no adversary party, unless the State, which passes the law, or the municipalities which are its component parts and subject to its control, can be regarded as such.

But except in cases resting upon such reasons, we do not see how the legislature can have any power to abolish a maxim which is among the fundamentals of judicial authority. The people of the State, when framing their constitution, may possibly establish so great an anomaly, if they see fit;¹ but if the legislature is intrusted with apportioning and providing for the exercise of the judicial power, we cannot understand it to be authorized, in the execution of this trust, to do that which has never been [* 413] recognized as * being within the province of the judicial authority. To empower one party to a controversy to decide it for himself is not within the legislative authority, because it is not the establishment of any rule of action or decision, but is a placing of the other party, so far as that controversy is concerned, out of the protection of the law, and submitting him to the control of one whose interest it will be to decide arbitrarily and unjustly.²

Nor do we see how the objection of interest can be waived by the other party. If not taken before the decision is rendered, it will avail in an appellate court; and the suit may there be dismissed on that ground.³ The judge acting in such a case is not simply proceeding irregularly, but he is acting without jurisdiction. And if one of the judges constituting a court is disqualified on this ground, the judgment will be void, even though the proper number may have concurred in the result, not reckoning the interested party.⁴

¹ *Matter of Leefe*, 2 Barb. Ch. 39. Even this must be deemed doubtful since the adoption of the fourteenth article of the amendments to the federal Constitution, which denies to the State the right to deprive one of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.

² See *Ames v. Port Huron Log-Driving and Booming Co.*, 11 Mich. 139; *Hall v. Thayer*, 105 Mass. 325; *State v. Crane*, 36 N. J. 394; *Cypress*

Pond Draining Co. v. Hooper, 2 Met. (Ky.) 350; *Seuffeltown Fence Co. v. McAllister*, 12 Bush, 312.

³ *Richardson v. Welcome*, 6 Cnab. 332; *Dimes v. Proprietors of Grand Junction Canal*, 3 House of Lords Cases, 787. And see *Sigourney v. Sibley*, 21 Pick. 106; *Oakley v. Aspinwall*, 3 N. Y. 547.

⁴ In *Queen v. Justices of Hertfordshire*, 6 Queen's Bench, 753, it was decided that, if any one of the magis-

Mere formal acts necessary to enable the case to be brought before a proper tribunal for adjudication, an interested judge may do ;¹ but that is the extent of his power.

trates hearing a case at sessions was interested, the court was improperly constituted, and an order made in the case should be quashed. It was also decided that it was no answer to the objection, that there was a majority in favor of the decision without reckoning the interested party, nor that the interested party withdrew before the decision, if he appeared to have joined in discussing the matter with the other magistrates. See also *The Queen v. Justices of Suffolk*, 18

Q. B. 416; *The Queen v. Justices of London*, 18 Q. B. 421; *Peninsula R. R. Co. v. Howard*, 20 Mich. 26.

¹ *Richardson v. Boston*, 1 Curtis, C. C. 251; *Washington Insurance Co. v. Price*, Hopk. Ch. 2; *Buckingham v. Davis*, 9 Md. 324; *Heydenfeldt v. Towns*, 27 Ala. 430. If the judge who renders judgment in a cause had previously been attorney in it, the judgment is a nullity. *Reams v. Kearns*, 5 Cold. 217.

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* CHAPTER XII.

LIBERTY OF SPEECH AND OF THE PRESS.

THE first amendment to the Constitution of the United States provides, among other things, that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press. With jealous care of what is almost universally regarded as a highly important right, essential to the existence and perpetuity of free government, a provision of similar import has been embodied in each of the State constitutions, and a constitutional principle is thereby established which is supposed to form a shield of protection to the free expression of opinion in every part of our land.¹

¹ The following are the constitutional provisions: *Maine*: Every citizen may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of this liberty. No law shall be passed regulating or restraining the freedom of the press; and, in prosecutions for any publication respecting the official conduct of men in public capacity, or the qualifications of those who are candidates for the suffrages of the people, or where the matter published is proper for public information, the truth thereof may be given in evidence; and in all indictments for libel, the jury, after having received the direction of the court, shall have a right to determine, at their discretion, the law and the fact. Declaration of Rights, § 4. — *New Hampshire*: The liberty of the press is essential to the security of freedom in a State; it ought, therefore, to be inviolably preserved. Bill of Rights, § 22. — *Vermont*: That the people have a right to freedom of speech, and of writing and publishing their senti-

ments concerning the transactions of government; therefore the freedom of the press ought not to be restrained. Declaration of Rights, Art. 13. — *Massachusetts*: The liberty of the press is essential to the security of freedom in a State; it ought not, therefore, to be restrained in this Commonwealth. Declaration of Rights, Art. 16. — *Rhode Island*: The liberty of the press being essential to the security of freedom in a State, any person may publish his sentiments on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty; and in all trials for libel, both civil and criminal, the truth, unless published from malicious motives, shall be sufficient defence to the person charged. Art. 1, § 20. — *Connecticut*: No law shall ever be passed to curtail or restrain the liberty of speech or of the press. In all prosecutions or indictments for libel, the truth may be given in evidence, and the jury shall have the right to determine the law and the facts, under the direction of the court. Art. 1, §§ 6 and 7. — *New York*: Every

* It is to be observed of these several provisions, that [* 415] they recognize certain rights as now existing, and seek to

person may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that right; and no law shall be passed to restrain or abridge the liberty of speech or the press. In all criminal prosecutions or indictments for libels, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury, and if it shall appear to the jury that the matter charged as libellous is true, and was published with good motives and for justifiable ends, the party shall be acquitted, and the jury shall have the right to determine the law and the fact. Art. 1, § 8. — *New Jersey*: Every person may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that right. No law shall be passed to restrain or abridge the liberty of speech or of the press. In all prosecutions or indictments for libel, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury; and if it shall appear to the jury that the matter charged as libellous is true, and was published with good motives and for justifiable ends, the party shall be acquitted; and the jury shall have the right to determine the law and the fact. Art. 1, § 5. — *Pennsylvania*: That the printing-press shall be free to every person who may undertake to examine the proceedings of the legislature, or any branch of government, and no law shall ever be made to restrain the right thereof. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invaluable rights of man, and every citizen may freely speak, write, and print on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty. No conviction shall be had in any prosecution for the publication of papers, relating to the official conduct of officers or men in public capacity, or to any other matter

proper for public investigation or information, where the fact that such publication was not maliciously or negligently made shall be established to the satisfaction of the jury; and in all indictments for libels, the jury shall have the right to determine the law and the facts, under the direction of the court, as in other cases. Art. 1, § 7. — *Delaware*: The press shall be free to every citizen who undertakes to examine the official conduct of men acting in public capacity, and any citizen may print on any such subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty. In prosecutions for publications investigating the proceedings of officers, or where the matter published is proper for public information, the truth thereof may be given in evidence; and in all indictments for libels, the jury may determine the facts and the law, as in other cases. Art. 1, § 5. — *Maryland*: That the liberty of the press ought to be inviolably preserved; that every citizen of the State ought to be allowed to speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that privilege. Declaration of Rights, Art. 40. — *West Virginia*: No law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press shall be passed; but the legislature may provide for the restraint and punishment of the publishing and vending of obscene books, papers, and pictures, and of libel and defamation of character, and for the recovery in civil action by the aggrieved party of suitable damages for such libel or defamation. Attempts to justify and uphold an armed invasion of the State, or an organized insurrection therein during the continuance of such invasion or insurrection, by publicly speaking, writing, or printing, or by publishing, or cir-

[* 416] protect and perpetuate * them, by declaring that they shall not be abridged, or that they shall remain inviolate. They

culating such writing or printing, may be by law declared a misdemeanor, and punished accordingly. In prosecutions and civil suits for libel, the truth may be given in evidence; and if it shall appear to the jury that the matter charged as libellous is true, and was published with good motives, and for justifiable ends, the verdict shall be for the defendant. Art. 2, §§ 4 and 5. — *Kentucky*: That printing-presses shall be free to every person who undertakes to examine the proceedings of the General Assembly, or any branch of the government, and no law shall ever be made to restrain the right thereof. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invaluable rights of man, and every citizen may freely speak, write, and print, on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty. In all prosecutions for the publication of papers investigating the official conduct of officers or men in a public capacity, or where the matter published is proper for public information, the truth thereof may be given in evidence; and in all indictments for libels, the jury shall have a right to determine the law and the facts, under the direction of the court, as in other cases. Art. 13, §§ 9 and 10. — *Tennessee*: Nearly the same as Pennsylvania. Art. 1, § 19. — *Ohio*: Every citizen may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of the right; and no law shall be passed to restrain or abridge liberty of speech or of the press. In all criminal prosecutions for libel, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury; and if it shall appear to the jury that the matter charged as libellous is true, and was published with good motives and for justifiable

ends, the party shall be acquitted. Art. 1, § 11. — *Iowa*, Art. 1, § 7, and *Nevada*, Art. 1, § 9. Substantially same as Ohio. — *Illinois*: Every person may freely speak, write, and publish on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty; and in all trials for libel, both civil and criminal, the truth, when published with good motives and for justifiable ends, shall be a sufficient defence. Art. 2, § 4. — *Indiana*: No law shall be passed restraining the free interchange of thought and opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print freely on any subject whatever; but for the abuse of that right every person shall be responsible. In all prosecutions for libel, the truth of the matters alleged to be libellous may be given in justification. Art. 1, §§ 9 and 10. — *Michigan*: In all prosecutions for libels, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury; and if it shall appear to the jury that the matter charged as libellous is true, and was published with good motives and for justifiable ends, the party shall be acquitted. The jury shall have the right to determine the law and the fact. Art. 6, § 25. — *Wisconsin*: Same as New York. Art. 1, § 3. — *Minnesota*: The liberty of the press shall for ever remain inviolate, and all persons may freely speak, write, and publish their sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of such right. Art. 1, § 3. — *Oregon*: No law shall be passed restraining the free expression of opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print freely on any subject whatever; but every person shall be responsible for the abuse of this right. Art. 1, § 8. — *California*: Same as New York. Art. 1, § 9. — *Kansas*: The liberty of the press

do not assume to create new rights, but * their purpose is [* 417] to protect the citizen in the enjoyment of those already

shall be inviolate, and all persons may freely speak, write, or publish their sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of such right; and in all civil or criminal actions for libel, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury; and if it shall appear that the alleged libellous matter was published for justifiable ends, the accused party shall be acquitted. Bill of Rights, § 11. — *Missouri*: That no law shall be passed impairing the freedom of speech; that every person shall be free to say, write, or publish whatever he will on every subject, being responsible for all abuse of that liberty; and that in all prosecutions for libel, the truth thereof may be given in evidence, and the jury, under the direction of the court, shall determine the law and the fact. Art. 2, § 14. — *Nebraska*: Same as Illinois. Art. 1, § 5. — *Arkansas*: The liberty of the press shall for ever remain inviolate. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invaluable rights of man, and all persons may freely speak, write, and publish their sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of such right. In all criminal prosecutions for libel, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury: and if it shall appear to the jury that the matter charged as libellous is true, and was published with good motives and for justifiable ends, the party shall be acquitted. Art. 1, § 2. — *Florida*: Every person may freely speak and write his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that right, and no law shall be passed to restrain or abridge the liberty of speech or the press. In all criminal prosecutions and civil actions for libel, the truth may be given in evidence to the jury; and if it appear

that the matter charged as libellous is true, and was published with good motives, the party shall be acquitted or exonerated. Declaration of Rights, § 10. — *Georgia*: No law shall ever be passed to curtail or restrain the liberty of speech or of the press; any person may speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty. Art. 1, § 1, par 15. — *Louisiana*: The press shall be free; every citizen may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of this liberty. Title 1, Art. 4. — *North Carolina*: The freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and therefore ought never to be restrained; but every individual shall be held responsible for the abuse of the same. Declaration of Rights, § 20. — *South Carolina*: All persons may freely speak, write, and publish their sentiments on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that right; and no laws shall be enacted to restrain or abridge the liberty of speech or of the press. In prosecutions for the publication of papers investigating the official conduct of officers or men in public capacity, or when the matter published is proper for public information, the truth thereof may be given in evidence; and in all indictments for libel the jury shall be judges of the law and the facts. Art. 1, §§ 7 and 8. — *Alabama*: That any citizen may speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty. That in prosecutions for the publication of papers investigating the official conduct of officers or men in public capacity, or when the matter published is proper for public information, the truth thereof may be given in evidence; and that

possessed. We are at once, therefore, turned back from these provisions to the pre-existing law, in order that we may ascertain what the rights are which are thus protected, and what is the extent of the privileges they undertake to assure.

At the common law, however, it will be found that liberty of the press was neither well protected nor well defined. The art of printing, in the hands of private persons, has, until within a comparatively recent period, been regarded rather as an instrument of mischief, which required the restraining hand of the government, than as a power for good, to be fostered and encouraged. Like a vicious beast it might be made useful if properly harnessed and restrained. The government assumed to itself the right to

determine what might or might not be published; and [*418] censors were appointed * without whose permission it was

criminal to publish a book or paper upon any subject. Through all the changes of government, this censorship was continued until after the Revolution of 1688, and there are no instances in English history of more cruel and relentless persecution than for the publication of books which now would pass unnoticed by the authorities. To a much later time the press was not free to publish even the current news of the day where the government could suppose itself to be interested in its suppression.

in all indictments for libels, the jury shall have the right to determine the law and the facts, under the direction of the court. Art. 1, §§ 5 and 13. — *Mississippi*: The freedom of speech and of the press shall be held sacred; and in all indictments for libel, the jury shall determine the law and the facts, under the direction of the court. Art. 1, § 4. — *Texas*: Every citizen shall be at liberty to speak, write, or publish his opinions on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that privilege; and no law shall ever be passed curtailing the liberty of speech or of the press. In prosecutions for the publication of papers, investigating the official conduct of officers or men in a public capacity, or when the matter published is proper for public information, the truth thereof may be given in evidence; and in all prosecutions

for libels, the jury shall have the right to determine the law and the facts, under the direction of the court, as in other cases. Art. 1, §§ 5 and 6. — *Virginia*: That the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic governments, and any citizen may speak, write, and publish his sentiments on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty. Art. 1, § 14. — *Colorado*: That no law shall be passed impairing the freedom of speech; that every person shall be free to speak, write, or publish whatever he will on any subject, being responsible for all abuse of that liberty; and that [in] all suits and prosecutions for libel, the truth thereof may be given in evidence, and the jury, under the direction of the court, shall determine the law and the fact. Art. 2, § 10.

Many matters, the publication of which now seems important to the just, discreet, and harmonious administration of free institutions, and to the proper observation of public officers by those interested in the discharge of their duties, were treated by the public authorities as offences against good order, and contempts of their authority. By a fiction not very far removed from the truth, the Parliament was supposed to sit with closed doors. No official publication of its debates was provided for, and no other was allowed.¹ The brief sketches which found their way into print were usually disguised under the garb of discussions in a fictitious parliament, held in a foreign country. Several times the Parliament resolved that any such publication, or any intermeddling by letter-writers, was a breach of their privileges, and should be punished accordingly on discovery of the offenders. For such a publication in 1747 the editor of the "Gentleman's Magazine" was brought to the bar of the House of Commons for reprimand, and only discharged on expressing his contrition. The general publication of Parliamentary debates dates only from the American Revolution, and even then was still considered a technical breach of privilege.²

The American Colonies followed the practice of the parent country.³ Even the laws were not at first published for general circulation, and it seemed to be thought desirable by the magis-

¹ In 1641, Sir Edward Deering was expelled and imprisoned for publishing a collection of his own speeches, and the book was ordered to be burned by the common hangman. See May's Const. Hist. c. 7.

² See May's Constitutional History, c. 7, 9, and 10, for a complete account of the struggle between the government and the press, resulting at last in the complete enfranchisement and protection of the latter in the publication of all matters of public interest, and in the discussion of public affairs. Freedom to report proceedings and debates was due at last to Wilkes, who, worthless as he was, proved a great public benefactor in his obstinate defence of liberty of the press and security from arbitrary search and arrest. A fair publication of a debate is now held to be privi-

leged; and comments on public legislative proceedings are not actionable, so long as a jury shall think them honest and made in a fair spirit, and such as are justified by the circumstances. *Wason v. Walter*, Law Rep. 4 Q. B. 73.

³ The General Court of Massachusetts "appointed two persons, in October, 1662, licensers of the press, and prohibited the publishing any books or papers which should not be supervised by them, and in 1668 the supervisors having allowed of the printing 'Thomas à Kempis de Imitatione Christi,' the court interposed, 'it being wrote by a popish minister, and containing some things less safe to be infused among the people,' and therefore they commended to the licensers a more full revisal, and ordered the press to stop in the mean time."

¹ Hutchinson's Mass. 257, 2d ed.

trates to keep the people in ignorance of the precise [* 419] boundary * between that which was lawful and that which was prohibited, as more likely to make them avoid all doubtful actions. The magistrates of Massachusetts, when compelled by public opinion to suffer the publication of general laws in 1649, permitted it under protest, as a hazardous experiment. For publishing the laws of one session in Virginia, in 1682, the printer was arrested and put under bonds until the king's pleasure could be known, and the king's pleasure was declared that no printing should be allowed in the Colony.¹ There were not wanting instances of the public burning of books, as offenders against good order. Such was the fate of Elliot's book in defence of unmixed principles of popular freedom,² and Calef's book against Cotton Mather, which was given to the flames at Cambridge.³ A single printing-press was introduced into the Colony so early as 1640; but the publication even of State documents did not become free until 1719, when, after a quarrel between Governor Shute and the House, he directed that body not to print one of their remonstrances, and, on their disobeying, sought in vain to procure the punishment of their printer.⁴ When Dongan was sent out as Governor of New York in 1683, he was expressly instructed to suffer no printing,⁵ and that Colony obtained its first press in 1692, through a Philadelphia printer being driven thence for publishing an address from a Quaker, in which he accused his brethren in office of being inconsistent with their principles in exercising political authority.⁶ So late as 1671, Governor Berkley of Virginia expressed his thankfulness that neither free schools nor printing were introduced in the Colony, and his trust that these breeders of disobedience, heresy, and sects, would long be unknown.⁷

The public bodies of the united nation did not at once invite publicity to their deliberations. The Constitutional Convention of 1787 sat with closed doors, and although imperfect reports of the debates have since been published, the injunction of secrecy upon its members was never removed. The Senate for a

¹ 1 Hildreth, History of the United States, 561.

² 1 Hutchinson's Mass. (2d ed.) 211; 2 Bancroft, 73; 1 Hildreth, 452; 2 Palfrey's New England, 511, 512.

³ 1 Bancroft, 97; 2 Hildreth, 166.

⁴ 2 Hildreth, 298.

⁵ 2 Hildreth, 77.

⁶ 2 Hildreth, 171.

⁷ 1 Hildreth, 526; 2 Hen. Stat. 517; Wise's Seven Decades of the Union, 310.

time followed this example, and the first open * debate [* 420] was had in 1793, on the occasion of the controversy over the right of Mr. Gallatin to a seat in that body.¹ The House of Representatives sat with open doors from the first, tolerating the presence of reporters, — over whose admission, however, the Speaker assumed control, — and refusing in 1796 the pittance of two thousand dollars for full publication of debates.

It must be evident from these brief references that liberty of the press, as now understood and enjoyed, is of very recent origin ;² and commentators seem to be agreed in the opinion that the term itself means only that liberty of publication without the previous permission of the government, which was obtained by the abolition of the censorship. In a strict sense, Mr. Hallam says, it consists merely in exemption from a licenser.³ A similar view is expressed by De Lolme. “Liberty of the press,” he says, “consists in this : that neither courts of justice, nor any other judges whatever, are authorized to take notice of writings *intended* for the press, but are confined to those which are actually printed.”⁴ Blackstone also adopts the same opinion,⁵ and it has been followed by American commentators of standard authority as embodying correctly the idea incorporated in the constitutional law of the country by the provisions in the American Bills of Rights.⁶

It is conceded on all sides that the common-law rules that subjected the libeller to responsibility for the private injury, or the public scandal or disorder occasioned by his conduct, are not abolished by the protection extended to the press in our constitutions. The words of Ch. J. *Parker* of Massachusetts on this sub-

¹ “This broke the spell of deliberations in secret conclave ; and a few days afterwards, on the 20th of the same month, a general resolution was adopted by the Senate, that, after the end of the present annual session, its proceedings in its legislative capacity should be with open doors, unless in special cases which, in the judgment of the body, should require secrecy.” *Life of Madison*, by Rives, Vol. III. p. 371.

The first legislative body in America to throw open its debates to the public was the General Court of

Massachusetts, in 1766, on the motion of Otis. *Tudor's Life of Otis*, 252.

² It is mentioned neither in the English Petition of Rights nor in the Bill of Rights ; of so little importance did it seem to those who were seeking to redress grievances in those days.

³ Hallam's *Const. Hist. of England*, c. 15.

⁴ De Lolme, *Const. of England*, 254.

⁵ 4 Bl. Com. 151.

⁶ Story on *Const.* § 1889 ; 2 Kent, 17 *et seq.* ; Rawle on *Const.* c. 10.

ject have been frequently quoted, generally recognized as sound in principle, and accepted as authority. "Nor does our constitution or declaration of rights," he says, speaking of his own State, "abrogate the common law in this respect, as some have insisted. The sixteenth article declares that 'liberty of the press is essential to the security of freedom in a State ; it ought not therefore to be restrained in this Commonwealth.' The *liberty* of the [* 421] press, not its licentiousness : * this is the construction which a just regard to the other parts of that instrument, and to the wisdom of those who founded it, requires. In the eleventh article it is declared that every subject of the Commonwealth ought to find a certain remedy, by having recourse to the laws, for all injuries or wrongs which he may receive in his person, property, or character ; and thus the general declaration in the sixteenth article is qualified. Besides, it is well understood and received as a commentary on this provision for the liberty of the press, that it was intended to prevent all such *previous restraints* upon publications as had been practised by other governments, and in early times here, to stifle the efforts of patriots towards enlightening their fellow-subjects upon their rights and the duties of rulers. The liberty of the press was to be unrestrained, but he who used it was to be responsible in case of its abuse ; like the right to keep fire-arms, which does not protect him who uses them for annoyance or destruction." ¹

But while we concede that liberty of speech and of the press does not imply complete exemption from responsibility for every thing a citizen may say or publish, and complete immunity to ruin the reputation or business of others so far as falsehood and detraction may be able to accomplish that end, it is nevertheless believed that the mere exemption from previous restraints cannot be all that is secured by the constitutional provisions, inasmuch as of words to be uttered orally there can be no previous censorship, and the liberty of the press might be rendered a mockery and a delusion, and the phrase itself a byword, if, while every man was at liberty to publish what he pleased, the public authorities might nevertheless punish him for harmless publications.

¹ Commonwealth v. Blanding, 3 State v. Lehre, 2 Rep. Const. Court, Pick. 313. See charge of Chief Justice McKean of Penn., 5 Hildreth, 809 ; Respublica v. Dennie, 4 Yeates, 267. 166 ; Wharton's State Trials, 323 ;

An examination of the controversies which have grown out of the repressive measures resorted to for the purpose of restraining the free expression of opinion will sufficiently indicate the purpose of the guaranties which have since been secured against such restraints in the future. Except so far as those guaranties relate to the mode of trial, and are designed to secure to every accused person the right to be judged by the opinion of a jury upon the criminality of his act, their purpose has evidently been to protect parties in the free publication of matters of public concern, to * secure their right to a free discussion of public [* 422] events and public measures, and to enable every citizen at any time to bring the government and any person in authority to the bar of public opinion by any just criticism upon their conduct in the exercise of the authority which the people have conferred upon them. To guard against repressive measures by the several departments of the government, by means of which persons in power might secure themselves and their favorites from just scrutiny and condemnation, was the general purpose ; and there was no design or desire to modify the rules of the common law which protected private character from detraction and abuse, except so far as seemed necessary to secure to accused parties a fair trial. The evils to be guarded against were not the censorship of the press merely, but any action of the government by means of which it might prevent such free and general discussion of public matters as seems absolutely essential to prepare the people for an intelligent exercise of their rights as citizens.

The constitutional liberty of speech and of the press, as we understand it, implies a right to freely utter and publish whatever the citizen may please, and to be protected against any responsibility for so doing, except so far as such publications, from their blasphemy, obscenity, or scandalous character, may be a public offence, or as by their falsehood and malice they may injuriously affect the standing, reputation, or pecuniary interests of individuals. Or, to state the same thing in somewhat different words, we understand liberty of speech and of the press to imply not only liberty to publish, but complete immunity from legal censure and punishment for the publication, so long as it is not harmful in its character, when tested by such standards as the law affords. For these standards we must look to the common-law rules which were in force when the constitutional guaranties

were established, and in reference to which they have been adopted.

At the common law an action would lie against any person publishing a false and malicious communication tending to disgrace or injure another. Falsehood, malice, and injury were the elements of the action; but as the law presumed innocence of crime or misconduct until the contrary was proved, the falsity of an injurious publication was presumed until its truth was averred and substantiated by the defendant; and if false, malice in the publication was also presumed unless the publication was privileged under rules to be hereafter stated. There were many cases, also, where [* 423] the law presumed injury, and did not call upon the complaining party to make any other showing that he was damnified than such implication as arose from the character of the communication itself. One of these was where the charge, if true, would subject the party charged to an indictment for a crime involving moral turpitude, or subject him to an infamous punishment;¹ but in such case it seems not to be important that the charge imports a crime already punished, or for which a pros-

¹ *Brooker v. Coffin*, 5 Johns. 188; *Alexander v. Alexander*, 9 Wend. 141; *Young v. Miller*, 3 Hill, 21; *Davis v. Brown*, 27 Ohio, n. s. 326; *Todd v. Rough*, 10 S. & R. 18; *Beck v. Stitzel*, 21 Penn. St. 522; *Stitzel v. Reynolds*, 67 Penn. St. 54; *Klumph v. Dunn*, 66 Penn. St. 141; *Hoag v. Hatch*, 23 Conn. 585; *Billings v. Wing*, 7 Vt. 439; *Harrington v. Miles*, 11 Kan. 480; s. c. 15 Am. Rep. 355; *Montgomery v. Deeley*, 3 Wis. 709; *Filber v. Danterman*, 26 Wis. 518; *Perdue v. Burnett*, Minor, 138; *McCuen v. Ludlum*, 17 N. J. 12; *Gage v. Shelton*, 3 Rich. 242; *Pollard v. Lyon*, 91 U. S. Rep. 225; *Wagaman v. Byars*, 17 Md. 183; *Castleberry v. Kelly*, 26 Geo. 606; *Burton v. Burton*, 3 Greene (Iowa), 316; *Simmons v. Holster*, 13 Minn. 249. If, however, the words, though seeming to charge a crime, are equivocal, and may be understood in an innocent sense, they will not be actionable without the

proper averment to show the sense in which they were used; as, for instance, where one is charged with having sworn falsely; which may or may not be a crime. *Gilman v. Lowell*, 8 Wend. 573; *Brown v. Hanson*, 53 Geo. 682; *Crone v. Angell*, 14 Mich. 340; *Bricker v. Potts*, 12 Penn. St. 200. It is not necessary, however, that technical words be employed; if the necessary inference, taking the words together, is a charge of crime, it is sufficient. *Morgan v. Livingston*, 2 Rich. 573; *True v. Plumley*, 36 Me. 466; *Curtis v. Curtis*, 10 Bing. 477. But to say of one "He has stolen my land" is not actionable *per se*, land not being the subject of larceny. *Ogden v. Biley*, 14 N. J. 186; *Underhill v. Welton*, 32 Vt. 40; *Ayers v. Grider*, 15 Ill. 37; *Edgerly v. Swain*, 32 N. H. 476; *Trabue v. Maya*, 3 Dana, 138; *Perry v. Man*, 1 R. I. 263; *Wright v. Lindsay*, 20 Ala. 428; *Cock v. Weatherby*, 13 Miss. 333.

ecution is barred by limitation of time.¹ Another was, to charge a man with contagious disease; the effect of the charge, if believed, being to exclude him from the society of his fellows.² Another was where the charge affected the party in his business, office, or means of livelihood, as where it was said of a postmaster that he would rob the mail;³ or of a trader, to whom credit is important, that he is insolvent;⁴ and the like. Still another was where any injurious charge holding a party up to public contempt, scorn, or ridicule was propagated by printing, writing, signs, burlesques, &c.⁵ And although it was formerly held that to charge a female verbally with want of chastity was not actionable without proof of special damage,⁶ yet of late a disposition has been exhibited to * break away from this rule in favor of one [* 424] more just and sensible,⁷ and the statutes of several of the States have either made adultery and incontinence punishable as crimes, whereby to charge them becomes actionable *per se* under the common-law rule, or else in express terms have declared such a charge actionable without proof of special damage.⁸

¹ *Carpenter v. Tarrant*, Cas. temp. Hardw. 339; *Smith v. Stewart*, 5 Penn. St. 372; *Holley v. Burgess*, 9 Ala. 728; *Van Ankin v. Westfall*, 14 Johns. 233; *Krebs v. Oliver*, 12 Gray, 239; *Baum v. Clause*, 5 Hill, 196; *Utley v. Campbell*, 5 T. B. Monr. 396; *Indianapolis Sun v. Horrell*, 53 Ind. 527.

² *Taylor v. Hall*, 2 Stra. 1389; *Carlslake v. Mapledoram*, 2 T. R. 473; *Watson v. McCarthy*, 2 Kelly, 57; *Nichols v. Guy*, 2 Ind. 82; *Irons v. Field*, 9 R. I. 216; *Kancher v. Blinn*, 29 Ohio, n. s. 62.

³ *Craig v. Brown*, 5 Blackf. 44. For other illustrations the following cases may be referred to: *Gottbehnet v. Hubachek*, 36 Wis. 515; *Robbins v. Treadway*, 2 J. J. Marsh. 540; *Hook v. Hackney*, 16 S. & R. 385.

⁴ *Brown v. Smith*, 13 C. B. 599; *Lindsey v. Smith*, 7 Johns. 360; *Mott v. Comstock*, 7 Cow. 654; *Lewis v. Hawley*, 2 Day, 495; *Nelson v. Borchenius*, 52 Ill. 236; *Orr v. Skofield*, 56 Me. 183; *Weiss v. Whittemore*, 28 Mich. 366.

⁵ *Janson v. Stuart*, 1 T. R. 748; *Van Ness v. Hamilton*, 19 Johns. 367; *Clegg v. Laffer*, 10 Bing. 250; *Steele v. Southwick*, 9 Johns. 214; *Pollard v. Lyon*, 91 U. S. Rep. 225.

⁶ *Gascoign v. Ambler*, 2 Ld. Raym. 1004; *Graves v. Blanchet*, 2 Salk. 696; *Wilby v. Elston*, 8 C. B. 142; *Buys v. Gillespie*, 2 Johns. 115; *Brooker v. Coffin*, 5 Johns. 188; *Bradt v. Towsley*, 13 Wend. 253; *Dyer v. Morris*, 4 Mo. 214; *Stanfield v. Boyer*, 6 H. & J. 248; *Woodbury v. Thompson*, 8 N. H. 194; *Berry v. Carter*, 4 Stew. & Port. 387; *Elliot v. Ailsbury*, 2 Bibb, 473; *Linney v. Malton*, 13 Tex. 449; *Underhill v. Welton*, 32 Vt. 40; *Castlebury v. Kelly*, 26 Geo. 606.

⁷ See the cases of *Sexton v. Todd*, *Wright*, 317; *Wilson v. Runyan*, *Wright*, 671; *Malone v. Stewart*, 15 Ohio, 319; *Moberly v. Preston*, 8 Mo. 462; *Sidgreaves v. Myatt*, 22 Ala. 617; *Terry v. Bright*, 4 Md. 430; *Spencer v. McMasters*, 16 Ill. 405.

⁸ See *Frisbie v. Fowler*, 2 Conn. 707; *Miller v. Parish*, 8 Pick. 384; *Robbins v. Fletcher*, 101 Mass. 115;

But in any other case a party complaining of a false, malicious, and disparaging communication might maintain an action therefor, on averment and proof of special damage;¹ though the truth of the charge, if pleaded and established, was generally a complete defence.²

In those cases in which the injurious charge was propagated by printing, writing, signs, burlesques, &c., there might also be a criminal prosecution, as well as a suit for private damages. The criminal prosecution was based upon the idea that the tendency of such publications was to excite to a breach of the public peace;³ and it might be supported in cases where the injurious publication related to whole classes or communities of people,

Pledger v. Hitchcock, 1 Kelly, 550; Smally v. Anderson, 2 T. B. Monr. 56; Williams v. Bryant, 4 Ala. 44; Dailey v. Reynolds, 4 Greene (Iowa), 354; Symonds v. Carter, 32 N. H. 458; McBrayer v. Hill, 4 Ired. 136; Morris v. Barkley, 1 Lit. 84; Phillips v. Wiley, 2 Lit. 153; Watts v. Greenlee, 2 Dev. 115; Drummond v. Leslie, 5 Blackf. 453; Worth v. Butler, 7 Blackf. 251; Richardson v. Roberts, 23 Geo. 215; Buford v. Wible, 32 Penn. St. 95; Freeman v. Price, 2 Bailey, 115; Regnier v. Cabot, 7 Ill. 34; Ranger v. Goodrich, 17 Wis. 78; Adams v. Rankin, 1 Duvall, 58; Downing v. Wilson, 36 Ala. 717; Cox v. Buuker, Morris, 269; Smith v. Silence, 4 Iowa, 321; Truman v. Taylor, 4 Iowa, 424; Beardsley v. Bridgeman, 17 Iowa, 242; Patterson v. Wilkinson, 55 Me. 45; Mayer v. Schleichter, 29 Wis. 646. The injustice of the common-law rule is made prominent in those cases where it has been held that an allegation that, in consequence of the charge, the plaintiff had fallen into disgrace, contempt, and infamy, and lost her credit, reputation, and peace of mind (Woodbury v. Thompson, 3 N. H. 194), and that she is shunned by her neighbors (Beach v. Ranney, 2 Hill, 310), was not a sufficient allegation of special damage to support the action.

In the following States, and perhaps some others, to impute unchastity to a female is actionable *per se* by statute: Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

¹ Kelley v. Partington, 3 Nev. & M. 116; Steele v. Southwick, 9 Johna. 214; Hallock v. Miller, 2 Barb. 630; Powers v. Dubois, 17 Wend. 63; Weed v. Foster, 11 Barb. 203; Cooper v. Greeley, 1 Denio, 347; Stone v. Cooper, 2 Denio, 293. The damage, however, must be of a pecuniary character. Beach v. Ranney, 2 Hill, 309. But very slight damage has been held sufficient to support considerable recoveries. Williams v. Hill, 19 Wend. 305; Bradt v. Towsley, 13 Wend. 259; Olmsted v. Miller, 1 Wend. 506; Moore v. Meagher, 1 Taunt. 39; Knight v. Gibbs, 1 Ad. & El. 43.

² See Heard on Libel and Slander, § 151; Townsend on Libel and Slander, § 73; Bourland v. Edison, 8 Grat. 27; Scott v. McKinnish, 15 Ala. 662; Porter v. Bothius, 59 Penn. St. 464; Hutchinson v. Wheeler, 35 Vt. 330; Thomas v. Dunaway, 30 Ill. 373; Huson v. Dale, 19 Mich. 17; Jarnigan v. Fleming, 43 Miss. 710; Knight v. Foster, 39 N. H. 576.

³ Commonwealth v. Clap, 4 Mass. 168.

without singling out any single individual so as to entitle him to a private remedy.¹ On similar grounds to publish inju-

¹ In *Palmer v. Concord*, 48 N. H. 214, suit was brought against a town for the destruction of a printing press by a mob. The defence was, that plaintiff had caused the mob by libellous articles published in his paper reflecting upon the army. Smith, J., says: "The first of these articles charges the United States forces in Virginia with cowardice, and holds them up as objects of ridicule therefor. The fourth article calls the army a 'mob;' and although the charges of murder and robbery may perhaps be considered as limited in their application, the charge of cowardice against the whole army is repeated. The fifth article in effect charges those bodies of soldiers who passed through, or occupied, Hampton, Martinsburg, Fairfax, or Germantown, with improper treatment of persons of all ages and sexes, in each of those places. If such charges had been made against a single soldier named in the articles, they would *prima facie* have constituted a libel. The tendency to expose him to contempt or ridicule could not be doubted, and the tendency to injure his professional reputation would be equally apparent. A soldier's character for courage or discipline is as essential to his good standing as a merchant's reputation for honesty, or a physician's reputation as to professional learning or skill, would be in their respective callings. And by military law, to which the soldier is amenable, we suppose cowardice would be regarded a crime punishable by severe penalties. As these charges were made against a body of men, without specifying individuals, it may be that no individual soldier could have maintained a private action therefor. But the question whether the publication might not afford ground for a public prose-

cution is entirely different. Civil suits for libel are maintainable only on the ground that the plaintiff has individually suffered damage. Indictments for libel are sustained principally because the publication of a libel tends to a breach of the peace, and thus to the disturbance of society at large. It is obvious that a libellous attack on a body of men, though no individuals be pointed out, may tend as much, or more, to create public disturbances as an attack on one individual; and a doubt has been suggested whether 'the fact of numbers defamed does not add to the enormity of the act.' See 2 Bishop on Criminal Law (3d ed.), § 922; Holt on Libel, 246-247; Russell on Crimes (1st Am. ed.), 305-332. In *Sumner v. Buel*, 12 Johns. 475, where a majority of the court held that a civil action could not be maintained by an officer of a regiment, for a publication reflecting on the officers generally, unless there was an averment of special damage, *Thompson*, Ch. J., said, p. 478: 'The offender, in such case, does not go without punishment. The law has provided a fit and proper remedy, by indictment; and the generality and extent of such libels make them more peculiarly public offences.' In *Ryckman v. Delavan*, 25 Wend. 186, *Walworth*, Chancellor, — who held, in opposition to the majority of the Court of Errors, that the plaintiff could not maintain a civil suit, because the publication reflected upon a class of individuals, and not upon the plaintiff personally, — said, pp. 195-196: 'There are many cases in the books where the writers and publishers of defamatory charges, reflecting upon the conduct of particular classes or bodies of individuals, have been proceeded against by indictment or information, although no particu-

[* 425] rious charges against a foreign * prince or ruler was also held punishable as a public offence, because tending to embroil the two nations, and to disturb the peace of the world.¹ These common-law rules are wholesome, and are still in force.

We are not so much concerned, however, with the general rules pertaining to the punishment of injurious publications, as with those special cases where, for some reason of general public policy, the publication is claimed to be privileged, and where, consequently, it may be supposed to be within the constitutional protection. It has always been held, notwithstanding the general rule that malice is to be inferred from a false and injurious publication, that there were some cases to which the presumption would not apply, and where a private action could not be maintained without proof of express malice. These are the cases which are said to be privileged. The term "privileged," as applied to a communication alleged to be libellous, means generally that the circumstances under which it was made were such as to rebut the legal inference of malice, and to throw upon the plain-

lar one was named or designated therein to whom the charge had a personal application. All those causes, however, whether the libel is upon an organized body of men, a legislature, a court of justice, a church, or a company of soldiers, or upon a particular class of individuals, proceed upon the ground that the charge is a misdemeanor, although it has no particular personal application to the individual of the body or class libelled; because it tends to excite the angry passions of the community either in favor of or against the body or class in reference to the conduct of which the charge is made, or because it tends to impair the confidence of the people in their government or in the administration of its laws.² In the course of his opinion, the Chancellor mentions a Scotch case (*Shearlock v. Beardsworth*, 1 Murray's Report of Jury Cases) where a civil suit was maintained, which was brought by a lieutenant-colonel, in behalf of his whole regiment, for defamation,

in calling them a regiment of cowards and blackguards.' In *Rex v. Hector Campbell*, King's Bench, Hil. Term, 1808 (cited in Holt on Libel, 249, 250), an information was granted for a libel on the college of physicians; and the respondent was convicted and sentenced. Cases may be supposed where publications, though of a defamatory nature, have such a wide and general application that, in all probability, a breach of the peace would not be caused thereby; but it does not seem to us that the present publication belongs to that class.

"Our conclusion is that the jury should have been instructed that the first, fourth, and fifth articles were *prima facie* libellous; and that the publication of those articles must be regarded as 'illegal conduct,' unless justified or excused by facts sufficient to constitute a defence to an indictment for libel."

¹ 27 State Trials, 627; 2 May, Const. History of England, c. 9.

tiff the burden of offering some evidence of its existence beyond the mere falsity of the charge.¹ The cases falling within this classification are those in which a party has a duty to discharge which requires that he should be allowed to speak freely and fully that which he believes ; where he is himself directly interested in the subject-matter of the communication, and makes it with a view to the protection or advancement of his own interest, or where he is communicating confidentially with a person interested in the communication, and by way of advice or admonition.² Many such cases suggest themselves which are purely of private concern : such as answers to inquiries into the character or conduct of one formerly employed by the person to whom the inquiry is addressed, and of whom the information is sought with a view to guiding the inquirer in his own action in determining upon employing the same person ;³ answers to inquiries by one tradesman of another * as to the solvency of a person [* 426] whom the inquirer has been desired to trust ;⁴ answers by a creditor to inquiries regarding the conduct and dealings of his debtor, made by one who had become surety for the debt ;⁵

¹ *Lewis v. Chapman*, 16 N. Y. 373, per *Seldon*, J. ; *Townsend on Libel and Slander*, § 209. “ It properly means this and nothing more: that the exceptional instances shall so far change the ordinary rule with respect to slanderous or libellous matter as to remove the regular and usual presumption of malice, and to make it incumbent on the party complaining to show malice.” *Daniel*, J., in *White v. Nichols*, 3 How. 266, 287. And see *Dillard v. Collins*, 25 Grat. 343.

² “ When a communication is made in confidence, either by or to a person interested in the communication, supposing it to be true, or by way of admonition or advice, it seems to be a general rule that malice (i. e. express malice) is essential to the maintenance of an action.” 1 *Star-
kie on Slander*, 321. See *Harrison v. Bush*, 5 El. & Bl. 344; *Somerville v. Hawkins*, 10 C. B. 589; *Wright v. Woodgate*, 2 Cr. M. & R. 573;

Whiteley v. Adams, 15 C. B. n. s. 392. A paper signed by a number of parties agreeing to join in the expense of prosecuting others, who were stated therein to have “ robbed and swindled ” them, is privileged. *Klinck v. Colby*, 46 N. Y. 427; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 360.

³ *Pattison v. Jones*, 8 B. & C. 578; *Elam v. Badger*, 23 Ill. 498; *Noonan v. Orton*, 32 Wis. 106; *Fowles v. Bowen*, 30 N. Y. 20; *Hatch v. Lane*, 105 Mass. 394; *Bradley v. Heath*, 12 Pick. 163. Compare *Fryer v. Kinnersley*, 15 C. B. n. s. 422.

⁴ *Smith v. Thomas*, 2 Bing. N. C. 372; *Story v. Challands*, 8 C. & P. 234. But the reports of a mercantile agency to its customers are not privileged. *Taylor v. Church*, 8 N. Y. 452; *Sunderlin v. Bradstreet*, 46 N. Y. 188; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 322. Compare *Beardsley v. Tappan*, 5 Blatch. 497.

⁵ *Dunman v. Bigg*, 1 Campb. 269, note; *White v. Nicholls*, 3 How. 266.

communications from an agent to his principal, reflecting injuriously upon the conduct of a third person in a matter connected with the agency;¹ communications to a near relative respecting the character of a person with whom the relative is in negotiation for marriage;² and as many more like cases as would fall within the same reasons.³ The rules of law applicable to these cases are very well settled, and are not likely to be changed with a view to greater stringency.⁴

Libels upon the Government.

At the common law it was indictable to publish any thing against the constitution of the country, or the established system of government. The basis of such a prosecution was the tendency of publications of this character to excite disaffection with the government, and thus induce a revolutionary spirit. The law always, * however, allowed a calm and temperate discussion of public events and meas-

¹ Washburn v. Cooke, 8 Denio, 110. See Easley v. Moss, 9 Ala. 288.

² Todd v. Hawkins, 8 C. & P. 88. But there is no protection to such a communication from a stranger. Joannes v. Bennett, 5 Allen, 170.

³ As to whether a stranger volunteering to give information injurious to another, to one interested in the knowledge, is privileged in so doing, see Coxhead v. Richards, 2 M. G. & S. 569; and Bennett v. Deacon, 2 M. G. & S. 628. Where a confidential relation of any description exists between the parties, the communication is privileged; as where the tenant of a nobleman had written to inform him of his gamekeeper's neglect of duty. Cockagne v. Hodgkinson, 5 C. & P. 543. Where a son-in-law wrote to warn his mother-in-law of the bad character of a man she was about to marry. Todd v. Hawkins, 8 C. & P. 88. Where a banker communicated with his correspondent concerning a note sent to him for collection; the court saying that "all that is neces-

sary to entitle such communication to be privileged is, that the relation of the parties should be such as to afford reasonable ground for supposing an innocent motive for giving the information, and to deprive the act of the appearance of officious intermeddling with the affairs of others." Lewis v. Chapman, 16 N. Y. 375. Where one communicated to an employer his suspicions of dishonest conduct in a servant towards himself. Amann v. Damm, 8 C. B. n. s. 597. Where a tradesman published in a newspaper that his servant had left his employ, and taken upon himself to collect the tradesman's bills. Hatch v. Lane, 9 105 Mass. 394. Compare Lawler v. Earle, 5 Allen, 22.

⁴ See further, Harrison v. Bush, 53 El. & Bl. 344; Shipley v. Todhunter, 7 C. & P. 680; Lawler v. Earle, 5 Allen, 22; Grimes v. Coyle, 6 B. & Mour. 301; Rector v. Smith, 111 Iowa, 302; Goslin v. Cannon, 1 Harr. 3; Joannes v. Bennett, 5 Allen, 169; State v. Burnham, 9 N. H. 34.

ures, and recognized in every man a right to give every public matter a candid, full, and free discussion. It was only when a publication went beyond this, and tended to excite tumult, that it became criminal.¹ It cannot be doubted, however, that the common-law rules on this subject were administered in many cases with great harshness, and that the courts, in the interests of repression and at the instigation of the government, often extended them to cases not within their reasons. This was especially true during the long and bloody struggle with France, at the close of the last and beginning of the present century, and for a few subsequent years, until a rising public discontent with political prosecutions began to lead to acquittals, and finally to abandonment of all such attempts to restrain the free expression of sentiments on public affairs. Such prosecutions have now altogether ceased in England. Like the censorship of the press, they have fallen out of the British constitutional system. "When the press errs, it is by the press itself that its errors are left to be corrected. Repression has ceased to be the policy of rulers, and statesmen have at length realized the wise maxim of Lord *Bacon*, that 'the punishing of wits enhances their authority, and a forbidden writing is thought to be a certain spark of truth that flies up in the faces of them that seek to tread it out.'"²

We shall venture to express a doubt if the common-law principles on this subject can be considered as having been practically adopted in the American States. It is certain that no prosecutions could now be maintained in the United States courts for libels on the general government, since those courts have no common-law jurisdiction,³ and there is now no statute, and never was except during the brief existence of the Sedition Law, which assumed to confer any such power.

The Sedition Law was passed during the administration of the elder Adams, when the fabric of government was still new and untried, and when many men seemed to think that the breath of heated party discussions might tumble it about their heads. Its

¹ *Regina v. Collins*, 9 C. & P. 456, per *Littledale*, J. See the proceedings against Thomas Paine, 27 State Trials, 357.

² May, *Constitutional History*, c. 10.
³ *United States v. Hudson*, 7 Cranch, 32. See *ante*, p. *19, and cases cited in note.

constitutionality was always disputed by a large party, and its impolicy was beyond question. It had a direct tendency to produce the very state of things it sought to repress; the [* 428] prosecutions * under it were instrumental, among other things, in the final overthrow and destruction of the party by which it was adopted, and it is impossible to conceive, at the present time, of any such state of things as would be likely to bring about its re-enactment, or the passage of any similar repressive statute.¹

When it is among the fundamental principles of the government that the people frame their own constitution, and that in doing so they reserve to themselves the power to amend it from time to time, as the public sentiment may change, it is difficult to conceive of any sound principle on which prosecutions for libels on the system of government can be based, except when their evident intent and purpose is to excite rebellion and civil war.² It is very easy to lay down a rule for the discussion of constitutional questions; that they are privileged, if conducted with calmness and temperance, and that they are not indictable unless they go beyond the bounds of fair discussion. But what is calmness and temperance, and what is fair in the discussion of supposed evils in the government? And if something is to be allowed "for a little feeling in men's minds,"³ how great shall be the allowance? The heat of the discussion will generally be in proportion to the magnitude of the evil as it appears to the party discussing it: must the question whether he has exceeded due bounds or not be tried by judge and jury, who may sit under different circumstances from those under which he has spoken, or at least after the heat of the occasion has passed away, and who, feeling none of the excitement themselves, may think it unreasonable that any one else should ever have felt it? The dangerous character of such prosecutions would be the more

¹ For prosecutions under this law, see *Lyon's Case*, Wharton's State Trials, 333; *Cooper's Case*, Wharton's State Trials, 659; *Haswell's Case*, Wharton's State Trials, 684; *Callender's Case*, Wharton's State Trials, 688. And see 2 Randall, *Life of Jefferson*, 417 421; 5 Hildreth, *History of United States*, 247, 365.

² The author of the *Life and Times of Warren* very truly remarks that "the common-law offence of libelling a government is ignored in constitutional systems, as inconsistent with the genius of free institutions." P. 47.

³ *Regina v. Collins*, 9 C. & P. 460, per *Littledale, J.*

glaring if aimed at those classes who, not being admitted to a share in the government, attacked the constitution in the point which excluded them. Sharp criticism, ridicule, and the exhibition of such feeling as a sense of injustice engenders, are to be expected from any discussion in these cases; but when the very classes who have established the exclusion as proper and reasonable are to try as judges and jurors the assaults made upon it, they will be very likely to enter upon the * ex- [* 429] amination with a preconceived notion that such assaults upon their reasonable regulations must necessarily be unreasonable. If any such principle of repression should ever be recognized in the common law of America, it might reasonably be anticipated that in times of high party excitement it would lead to prosecutions by the party in power, to bolster up wrongs and sustain abuses and oppressions by crushing adverse criticism and discussion. The evil, indeed, could not be of long continuance; for, judging from experience, the reaction would be speedy, thorough, and effectual; but it would be no less a serious evil while it lasted, the direct tendency of which would be to excite discontent and to breed a rebellious spirit. Repression of full and free discussion is dangerous in any government resting upon the will of the people. The people cannot fail to feel that they are deprived of rights, and will be certain to become discontented, when their discussion of public measures is sought to be circumscribed by the judgment of others upon their temperance or fairness. They must be left at liberty to speak with the freedom which the magnitude of the supposed wrongs appears in their minds to demand; and if they exceed all the proper bounds of moderation, the consolation must be, that the evil likely to spring from the violent discussion will probably be less, and its correction by public sentiment more speedy, than if the terrors of the law were brought to bear to prevent the discussion.

The English common-law rule which made libels on the constitution or the government indictable, as it was administered by the courts, seems to us unsuited to the condition and circumstances of the people of America, and therefore never to have been adopted in the several States. If we are correct in this, it would not be in the power of the State legislatures to pass laws which should make mere criticism of the constitution or of the measures of government a crime, however sharp, unreasona-

ble, and intemperate it might be. The constitutional freedom of speech and of the press must mean a freedom as broad as existed when the constitution which guarantees it was adopted, and it would not be in the power of the legislature to restrict it, unless it might be in those cases of publications injurious to private character, or public morals or safety, which come strictly within the reasons of civil or criminal liability at the common law, but in which, nevertheless, the common law as we have adopted it failed to provide a remedy. It certainly could not be said that freedom of speech was violated by a law which should [*430] *make imputing the want of chastity to a female actionable without proof of special damage; for the charge is one of grievous wrong, without any reason in public policy demanding protection to the communication, and the case is strictly analogous to many other cases where the common law made the party responsible for his false accusations. The constitutional provisions do not prevent the modification of the common-law rules of liability for libels and slanders, but they would not permit bringing new cases within those rules when they do not rest upon the same or similar reasons.¹

¹ In *Respublica v. Dennie*, 4 Yeates, 267, the defendant was indicted in 1805 for publishing the following in a public newspaper: "A democracy is scarcely tolerated at any period of national history. Its omens are always sinister, and its powers are unpropitious. With all the lights of experience blazing before our eyes, it is impossible not to discover the futility of this form of government. It was weak and wicked at Athens, it was bad in Sparta, and worse in Rome. It has been tried in France, and terminated in despotism. It was tried in England, and rejected with the utmost loathing and abhorrence. It is on its trial here, and its issue will be civil war, desolation, and anarchy. No wise man but discerns its imperfections, no good man but shudders at its miseries, no honest man but proclaims its fraud, and no brave man but draws his sword against its force. The institution of

a scheme of polity so radically contemptible and vicious is a memorable example of what the villany of some men can devise, the folly of others receive, and both establish in spite of reason, reflection, and sensation." Judge Yeates charged the jury, among other things, as follows: "The seventh section of the ninth article of the constitution of the State must be our guide upon this occasion: it forms the solemn compact between the people and the three branches of the government, — the legislative, executive, and judicial powers. Neither of them can exceed the limits prescribed to them respectively. To this exposition of the public will every branch of the common law and of our municipal acts of assembly must conform; and if incompatible therewith, they must yield and give way. Judicial decisions cannot weigh against it when repugnant thereto. It runs thus: 'The printing-presses

* *Criticism upon Officers and Candidates for Office.* [* 431]

There are certain cases where criticism upon public officers, their actions, character, and motives, is not only recognized as

shall be free to every person who undertakes to examine the proceedings of the legislature, or any branch of the government; and no law shall ever be made to restrain the right thereof. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invaluable rights of man; and every citizen may freely speak, write, and print on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty. In prosecutions for the publication of papers, investigating the official conduct of officers or men in a public capacity, or where the matter published is proper for public information, the truth thereof may be given in evidence; and in all indictments for libels, the jury shall have a right to determine the law and the facts under the direction of the court, as in other cases.' Thus it is evident that legislative acts, or of any branch of the government, are open to public discussion; and every citizen may freely speak, write, or print on any subject, but is accountable for the abuse of that privilege. There shall be no licensers of the press. Publish as you please in the first instance, without control; but you are answerable both to the community and the individual if you proceed to unwarrantable lengths. No alteration is hereby made in the law as to private men affected by injurious publications, unless the discussion be proper for public information. But 'if one uses the weapon of truth wantonly for disturbing the peace of families, he is guilty of a libel.' Per General *Hamilton*, in *Croswell's Trial*, p. 70. The matter published is not proper for public information. The common

weal is not interested in such a communication, except to suppress it.

"What is the meaning of the words 'being responsible for the abuse of that liberty,' if the jury are interdicted from deciding on the case? Who else can constitutionally decide on it? The expressions relate to and pervade every part of the sentence. The objection that the determinations of juries may vary at different times, arising from their different political opinions, proves too much. The same matter may be objected against them when party spirit runs high, in other criminal prosecutions. But we have no other constitutional mode of decision pointed out to us, and we are bound to use the method described.

"It is no infraction of the law to publish temperate investigations of the nature and forms of government. The day is long past since *Algernon Sidney's* celebrated treatise on government, cited on this trial, was considered as a treasonable libel. The enlightened advocates of representative republican government pride themselves in the reflection that the more deeply their system is examined, the more fully will the judgments of honest men be satisfied that it is the most conducive to the safety and happiness of a free people. Such matters are 'proper for public information.' But there is a marked and evident distinction between such publications and those which are plainly accompanied with a criminal intent, deliberately designed to loosen the social band of union, totally to unhinge the minds of the citizens, and to produce popular discontent with the exercise of power by the known con-

[*482] *legitimate, but large latitude and great freedom of expression are permitted, so long' as good faith inspires

stituted authorities. These latter writings are subversive of all government and good order. 'The liberty of the press consists in publishing the truth, from good motives and for justifiable ends, though it reflects on government or on magistrates.' Per General Hamilton, in *Crowell's Trial*, pp. 53, 54. It disseminates political knowledge, and, by adding to the common stock of freedom, gives a just confidence to every individual. But the malicious publications which I have reprobated infect insidiously the public mind with a subtle poison, and produce the most mischievous and alarming consequences by their tendency to anarchy, sedition, and civil war. We cannot, consistently with our official duty, declare such conduct punishable. We believe that it is not justified by the words or meaning of our constitution. It is true it may not be easy in every instance to draw the exact distinguishing line. To the jury it peculiarly belongs to decide on the intent and object of the writing. It is their duty to judge candidly and fairly leaning to the favorable side when the criminal intent is not clearly and evidently ascertained.

"It remains, therefore, under our most careful consideration of the ninth article of the Constitution, for the jury to divest themselves of all political prejudices (if any such they have), and dispassionately to examine the publication which is the ground of the present prosecution. They must decide on their oaths, as they will answer to God and their country, whether the defendant, as a factious and seditious person, with the criminal intentions imputed to him, in order to accomplish the objects stated in the indictment, did make and publish the writing in question. Should

they find the charges laid against them in the indictment to be well founded, they are bound to find him guilty. They must judge for themselves on the plain import of the words, without any forced or strained construction of the meaning of the author or editor, and determine on the correctness of the innuendoes. To every word they will assign its natural sense, but will collect the true intention from the context, the whole piece. They will accurately weigh the probabilities of the charge against a literary man. Consequences they will wholly disregard, but firmly discharge their duty. Representative republican governments stand on immovable bases, which cannot be shaken by theoretical systems. Yet if the consciences of the jury shall be clearly satisfied that the publication was seditiously, maliciously, and wilfully aimed at the independence of the United States, the Constitution thereof or of this State, they should convict the defendant. If, on the other hand, the production was honestly meant to inform the public mind, and warn them against supposed dangers in society, though the subject may have been treated erroneously, or that the censures on democracy were bestowed on pure unmixed democracy, where the people *en masse* execute the sovereign power without the medium of their representatives (agreeably to our forms of government), as have occurred at different times in Athens, Sparta, Rome, France, and England, then, however the judgments of the jury may incline them to think individually, they should acquit the defendant. In the first instance the act would be criminal; in the last it would be innocent. If the jury should doubt of the criminal intention, then also the

the communication. There are cases where it is clearly the duty of every one to speak freely what he may have to say concerning public officers, or those who may present themselves for public positions. Through the ballot-box the electors approve or condemn those who ask their suffrages; and if they condemn, though upon grounds the most unjust or frivolous, the law affords no redress. Some officers, however, are not chosen by the people directly, but designated through some other mode of appointment. But the public have a right to be * heard on [* 433] the question of their selection; and they have the right, for such reasons as seem to their minds sufficient, to ask for their dismissal afterwards. They have also the right to complain of official conduct affecting themselves, and to petition for a redress of grievances. A principal purpose in perpetuating and guarding the right of petition is to insure to the public the privilege of being heard in these and the like cases.

In a case in the Court for the Correction of Errors of the State of New York, a party was prosecuted for a libel contained in a petition signed by him and a number of other citizens of his county, and presented to the council of appointment, praying for the removal of the plaintiff from the office of district attorney of the county, which, the petition charged, he was prostituting to private purposes. The defendant did not justify the truth of this allegation, and the plaintiff had judgment. On error, the sole question was, whether the communication was to be regarded as privileged, that character having been denied it by the court below. The prevailing opinion in the court of review characterized this as "a decision which violates the most sacred and unquestionable rights of free citizens; rights essential to the very existence of a free government; rights necessarily connected with the relations of constituent and representative; the right of petitioning for a redress of grievances, and the right of remonstrating to the competent authority against the abuse of official functions." And it was held that the communication was privileged, and

law pronounces that he should be acquitted. 4 Burr. 2552, per Lord Mansfield." Verdict, not guilty. The fate of this prosecution was the same that would attend any of a similar character in this country, admitting its law to be sound, except possibly in cases of violent excitement, and when a jury could be made to believe that the defendant contemplated and was laboring to produce a change of government, not by constitutional means, but by rebellion and civil war.

could not support an action for libel, unless the plaintiff could show that the petition was malicious and groundless, and presented for the purpose of injuring his character.¹ Such a petition, it was said, although containing false and injurious aspersions, did not *prima facie* carry with it the presumption of malice.² A similar ruling was made by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, where a party was prosecuted for charges against a justice of the peace, contained in a deposition made to be presented to the governor.³ The subsequent case of *Howard v. Thompson*⁴ has enlarged this rule somewhat, and has required of the plaintiff, in order to sustain his action in any such case, to prove not [* 434] only malice in the defendant, but also a want of probable cause for believing the injurious charges which the petition contained. The action for libel, in such a case, it was said, was in the nature of an action for malicious prosecution; and in that action malice and want of probable cause are both necessary ingredients. And it has also been held that in such a case the court will neither compel the officer to whom it was addressed to produce the petition in evidence, nor will they suffer its contents to be proved by parol.⁵

The rule of protection in these cases does not appear to be disputed, and has been laid down in other cases coming within the same reasons.⁶ The rule, however, is subject to this qualifi-

¹ *Thorn v. Blanchard*, 5 Johns. 528, per *Clinton*, Senator.

² *Ibid.* p. 526, per *L'Hommedieu*, Senator.

³ *Gray v. Pentland*, 2 S. & R. 23. A remonstrance against the employment of a school teacher is privileged. *Van Arsdale v. Lavery*, 69 Penn. St. 103. For similar cases of privilege see *Larkin v. Noonan*, 19 Wis. 82; *Whitney v. Allen*, 62 Ill. 472; *Reid v. Delorme*, 2 Brev. 76.

⁴ 21 Wend. 319. See *Harris v. Harrington*, 2 Tyler, 129; *Bodwell v. Osgood*, 3 Pick. 379.

⁵ *Gray v. Pentland*, 2 S. & R. 23. See *Hare v. Mellor*, 3 Lev. 188.

⁶ In *Kershaw v. Bailey*, 1 Exch. 743, the defendant was prosecuted for slander in a communication made by him to the vestry, imputing perjury to the plaintiff as a reason why the

vestry should not return him on the list of persons qualified to serve as constables. The defendant was a parishioner, and his communication was held privileged. In *O'Donaghue v. McGovern*, 23 Wend. 26, a communication from a member of a church to his bishop, respecting the character, moral conduct, and demeanor of a clergyman of the church, was placed upon the same footing of privilege. And see *Reid v. Delorme*, 2 Brev. 76; *Chapman v. Calder*, 14 Penn. St. 365. A remonstrance to the board of excise, against the granting of a license to the plaintiff, comes under the same rule of protection. *Vanderzee v. McGregor*, 12 Wend. 545. See also *Kendillon v. Malthy*, 1 Car. & Marsh. 402; *Woodward v. Landor*, 6 C. & P. 548; *Streety v. Wood*, 15 Barb. 105; *Bradley v. Heath*, 12 Pick. 168.

cation, that the petition or remonstrance must be addressed to the body or officer having the power of appointment or removal, or the authority to give the redress or grant the relief which is sought ; or at least that the petitioner should really and in good faith believe he is addressing himself to an authority possessing power in the premises.¹

* Such being the rule of privilege when one interested [* 485] in the discharge of powers of a public nature is addressing himself to the body having the authority of appointment, supervision, or removal, the question arises whether the same reasons do not require the like privilege when the citizen addresses himself to his fellow-citizens in regard to the conduct of persons elevated to office by their suffrages, or in regard to the character, capacity, or fitness of those who may present themselves, or be presented by their friends, — which always assumes their assent, — as candidates for public positions.

When Morgan Lewis was Governor of the State of New York, and was a candidate for re-election, a public meeting of his opponents was called, at which an address was adopted condemning his conduct in various particulars. Among other things, he was charged with want of fidelity to his party, pursuing a system of family aggrandizement in his appointments, signing the charter of a bank with notice that it had been procured by fraudulent practices, publishing doctrines unworthy of a chief magistrate and subversive of the dearest interests of society, attempting to de-

¹ This principle is recognized in all the cases referred to. See also *Fairman v. Ives*, 5 B. & Ald. 642. In that case a petition addressed by a creditor of an officer in the army to the Secretary of War, *bona fide* and with a view of obtaining through his interference the payment of a debt due, and containing a statement of facts which, though derogatory to the officer's character, the creditor believed to be true, was held not to support an action. A letter to the Postmaster-General complaining of the conduct of a postmaster, with a view to the redress of grievances, is privileged. *Woodward v. Lander*, 6 C. & P. 548; *Cook v. Hill*, 3 Sandf. 341. And a complaint to a master, charging a servant with a dishonest act which had been imputed to the complaining party, has also been held privileged. *Coward v. Wellington*, 7 C. & P. 531. And see, further, *Hosmer v. Loveland*, 19 Barb. 111. A petition is privileged while being circulated. *Vanderzee v. McGregor*, 12 Wend. 545; *Streety v. Wood*, 15 Barb. 105. If, however, a petition is circulated and exhibited, but never presented, the fact that the libellous charge has assumed the form of a petition will not give it protection. *State v. Burnham*, 9 N. H. 34. And see *Hunt v. Bennett*, 19 N. Y. 173; *Van Wyck v. Aspinwall*, 17 N. Y. 190.

stroy the liberty of the press by vexatious prosecutions, and calling out the militia without occasion, thereby putting them to unnecessary trouble and expense. These seem to have been the more serious charges. The chairman of the meeting signed the address, and he was prosecuted by the governor for the libel contained therein. No justification was attempted upon the facts, and the Supreme Court held that the circumstances constituted no protection in the law. We quote from the opinion delivered by Mr. Justice *Thompson*:—

“Where the act is in itself unlawful, the proof of justification or excuse lies on the defendant, and on failure thereof the law implies a criminal intent.¹ If a libel contains an imputation of a crime, or is actionable without showing special damage, malice is, *prima facie*, implied; and if the defendant claims to be exonerated, on the ground of want of malice, it lies on him to show it was published under such circumstances as to rebut this presumption of law.² The manner and occasion of the publication have been relied on for this purpose, and in justification [*436] of the libel. It has *not been pretended but that the address in question would be libellous if considered as the act of an individual; but its being the act of a public meeting, of which the defendant was a member, and the publication being against a candidate for a public office, have been strenuously urged as affording a complete justification. The doctrine contended for by the defendant’s counsel results in the position that every publication ushered forth under the sanction of a public political meeting, against a candidate for an elective office, is beyond the reach of legal inquiry. To such a proposition I can never yield my assent. Although it was urged by the defendant’s counsel, I cannot discover any analogy whatever between the proceedings of such meetings and those of courts of justice, or any other organized tribunals known in our law for the redress of grievances. That electors should have a right to assemble, and freely and openly to examine the fitness and qualifications of candidates for public offices, and communicate their opinions to others, is a position to which I most cordially accede. But there is a wide difference between this privilege and a right irresponsibly to charge a candidate with direct specific and unfounded

¹ 5 Burr. 2667; 4 T. R. 127.

² 1 T. R. 110.

crimes. It would, in my judgment, be a monstrous doctrine to establish, that, when a man becomes a candidate for an elective office, he thereby gives to others a right to accuse him of any imaginable crimes, with impunity. Candidates have rights as well as electors; and those rights and privileges must be so guarded and protected as to harmonize one with the other. If one hundred or one thousand men, when assembled together, undertake to charge a man with specific crimes, I see no reason why it should be less criminal than if each one should do it individually at different times and places. All that is required, in the one case or the other, is, not to transcend the bounds of truth. If a man has committed a crime, any one has a right to charge him with it, and is not responsible for the accusation; and can any one wish for more latitude than this? Can it be claimed a privilege to accuse *ad libitum* a candidate with the most base and detestable crimes? There is nothing upon the record showing the least foundation or pretence for the charges. The accusations, then, being false, the *prima facie* presumption of law is, that the publication was malicious; and the circumstance of the defendant being associated with others does not *per se* rebut this presumption. How far this circumstance ought to affect the measure of damages * is a question not arising on [* 437] the record. It may in some cases mitigate, in others enhance, them. Every case must necessarily, from the nature of the action, depend upon its own circumstances, which are to be submitted to the sound discretion of a jury. It is difficult, and perhaps impossible, to lay down any general rule on the subject.”¹

The difficulty one meets with in the examination of this opinion is in satisfying himself in what manner the privileges of electors, of which it speaks, are protected by it. It is not discovered that the citizen who publicly discusses the qualifications and fitness of the candidate for public office who challenges his suffrage is, by this decision, so far as suits for recovery of private damages are concerned, placed on any different footing in the law from that occupied by one who drags before the public the character of a private individual. In either case, if the publication proves to be false, the law, it seems, attaches to it a presumption of malice. Nothing in the occasion justifies or excuses the act in either case.

¹ *Lewis v. Few*, 5 Johns. 1, 35. 261; *Aldrich v. Printing Co.*, 9 Minn. See also *Curtis v. Mussey*, 6 Gray, 133.

It is true it is intimated that it may lie in the sound discretion of a jury to be moderate in the imposition of damages, but it is also intimated that the jury would be at liberty to consider the circumstances of the public meeting an aggravation. There is absolutely no privilege of discussion to the elector under such a rule; no right to canvass the fitness of candidates beyond what exists in other cases. Whatever reasons he may give his neighbors for voting against a candidate, he must be prepared to support by evidence in the courts. In criminal prosecutions, if he can prove the truth of his charges, he may be protected in some cases where he would not be if the person assailed was only a private individual; because in the latter case he must make a showing of a justifiable occasion for uttering even the truth. But in all cases where the matter is proper for the public information, the truth justifies its publication.

The case above quoted has the sanction of a subsequent decision of the Court for the Correction of Errors, which in like manner repudiated the claim of privilege.¹ The office then in question was that of Lieutenant-Governor, and the candidate was charged in public newspapers with habits of intoxication which unfitted him for the position. And this last decision has since been followed as authority by the Superior Court of New York; in a case, however, which does not seem to be analogous, [* 438] since there the general public * was addressed in regard to a candidate for an office which was not elective, but was to be filled by an appointing board.²

The case of *King v. Root*³ will certainly strike any one as a very remarkable one, when the evidence given in the case is considered. The Lieutenant-Governor was charged in the public press with intoxication in the Senate Chamber, exhibited as he was proceeding to take his seat as presiding officer of that body. When prosecuted for libel, the publishers justified the charge as true, and brought a number of witnesses who were present on the occasion, and who testified to the correctness of the statement. There was therefore abundant reason for supposing the charge to

¹ *King v. Root*, 4 Wend. 113.

² *Hunt v. Bennett*, 4 E. D. Smith, 647; s. c. 19 N. Y. 173. See *Duncombe v. Daniell*, 8 C. & P. 213.

³ 4 Wend. 113. See the same case

in the Supreme Court, 7 Cow. 613.

It has recently been followed in Illinois, in the case of *Rearick v. Wilcox*, 81 Ill. 77.

have been published in the full belief in its truth. If it was true, there was abundant reason, on public grounds, for making the publication. Nevertheless, the jury were of opinion that the preponderance of evidence was against the truth of the charge, and being instructed that the only privilege the defendants had was "simply to publish the truth, and nothing more," and that the unsuccessful attempt at justification — which in fact was only the forming of such an issue, and putting in such evidence as showed the defendants had reason for making the charge — was in itself an aggravation of the offence, they returned a verdict for the plaintiff, with large damages. Throughout his instructions to the jury by the judge presiding at the trial, no privilege of discussion whatever is conceded to the elector, springing from the relation of elector and candidate, or of citizen and representative, but the case is considered as one where the accusation was to be defended precisely as if no public considerations had in any way been involved.¹

The law of New York is not placed by these decisions on a footing very satisfactory to those who claim the utmost freedom of discussion in public affairs. The courts have considered the subject as if there were no middle ground between absolute immunity for falsehood and the application of the same strict rules which prevail in other cases. Whether they have duly considered the importance of publicity and discussion on all matters of general concern in a representative government must be left to the consideration of judicial tribunals, as these questions shall come before them in the future. It is perhaps safe to say that the general public *sentiment and the prevailing [* 489] customs allow a greater freedom of discussion, and hold the elector less strictly to what he may be able to justify as true than is done by these decisions.²

¹ See also *Onslow v. Hone*, 3 Wils. 177; *Harwood v. Astley*, 1 New Rep. 47.

² "Freedom of speech is a principal pillar of a free government; when this support is taken away, the constitution of a free society is dissolved, and tyranny is erected on its ruins. Republics and limited monarchies derive their strength and vigor from a popular examination into the action

of the magistrates; this privilege in all ages has been and always will be abused. The best of men could not escape the censure and envy of the times they lived in. Yet this evil is not so great as it might appear at first sight. A magistrate who sincerely aims at the good of society will always have the inclinations of a great majority on his side, and an impartial posterity will not fail to render

A much more reasonable rule — though still, we think, not sufficiently comprehensive and liberal — was indicated by *Pollock*, C. B., in a case where it was urged upon the court that a sermon, preached but not published, was the subject of criticism in the enlarged style of commentary which that word seems to introduce according to the decided cases; and that the conduct of a clergyman with reference to the parish charity, and especially the rules of it, justified any *bona fide* remarks, whether founded in truth in point of fact, or justice in point of commentary, provided only they were an honest and *bona fide* comment. "My brother Wilde," he says, "urged upon the court the importance of this question; and I own I think it is a question of very grave and deep importance. He pressed upon us that, whenever the public had an interest in such a discussion, the law ought to protect it, and work out the public good by permitting public opinion, through the medium of the public press, to operate upon such transactions. I am not sure that so extended a rule is at all necessary to the public good. I do not in any degree complain; on the contrary, I think it quite right that all matters that are entirely of a public nature — conduct of ministers, conduct of judges, the proceedings of all persons who are responsible to the public at large — are deemed to be public property; and that all *bona fide* and honest remarks upon such persons, and their conduct, may be made with perfect freedom, and without being questioned too nicely for either truth or justice."¹ But these remarks were somewhat aside from the case then before the learned judge, and though supported by similar remarks from his associates, yet one of those associates deemed it important to draw such a distinction as to detract very much from the value of this privilege. "It seems," he says, "that there is a distinction, although I must say I really can hardly tell what the limits of it are, between the comments on a man's public conduct and on his private conduct. I can

him justice. Those abuses of the freedom of speech are the excesses of liberty. They ought to be repressed; but to whom dare we commit the care of doing it? An evil magistrate, intrusted with power to *punish for words*, would be armed with a weapon the most destructive and terrible. Under pretence of pruning off the

exuberant branches, he would be apt to destroy the tree." Franklin, Works by Sparks, Vol. II. p. 285.

¹ *Gathercole v. Miall*, 15 M. & W. 331-333. See *Commonwealth v. Clap*, 4 Mass. 103, per *Parsons*, Ch. J.; *Townsend on Libel and Slander*, § 260.

understand that you have a right to comment on the public acts of a minister, upon the public acts of a general, upon the public judgments of a judge, upon the public skill of an actor; I can understand that; but I do not know where the limit can be drawn distinctly between where the * comment is to cease, [* 440] as being applied solely to a man's public conduct, and where it is to begin as applicable to his private character; because, although it is quite competent for a person to speak of a judgment of a judge as being an extremely erroneous and foolish one, — and no doubt comments of that sort have great tendency to make persons careful of what they say, — and although it is perfectly competent for persons to say of an actor that he is a remarkably bad actor, and ought not to be permitted to perform such and such parts, because he performs them so ill, yet you ought not to be allowed to say of an actor that he has disgraced himself in private life, nor to say of a judge or a minister that he has committed felony, or any thing of that description, which is in no way connected with his public conduct or public judgment; and therefore there must be some limits, although I do not distinctly see where those limits are to be drawn. No doubt, if there are such limits, my brother Wilde is perfectly right in saying that the only ground on which the verdict and damages can go is for the excess, and not for the lawful exercise of the criticism.”¹

The radical defect in this rule, as it seems to us, consists in its assumption, that the private character of a public officer is something aside from, and not entering into or influencing, his public conduct; that a thoroughly dishonest man may be a just minister, and that a judge who is corrupt and debauched in private life may be pure and upright in his judgments; in other words, that an evil tree is as likely as any other to bring forth good fruits. Any such assumption is false to human nature, and contradictory to general experience; and whatever the law may say, the general public will still assume that a corrupt life will influence public conduct, and that a man who deals dishonestly with his fellows as individuals will not hesitate to defraud them in their aggregate and corporate capacity, if the opportunity shall be given him. They are, therefore, interested in knowing what is the character

¹ *Alderson, B., same case, p. 338.*

of their public servants, and what sort of persons are offering themselves for their suffrages. And if this be so, it would seem that there should be some privilege of comment; that that privilege could only be limited by good faith and just intention; and that of these it was the province of a jury to judge, in view of the nature of the charges made and the reasons which existed for making them.

The English cases allow considerable latitude of comment to publishers of public journals, upon subjects in the discussion of which the public may reasonably be supposed to have an [*441] interest, and they hold the discussions to be *privileged if conducted within the bounds of moderation and reason.¹ A more recent case, however, limits the range of privilege somewhat, and suggests a distinction which we are not aware has ever been judicially pointed out in this country, and which we are forced to believe the American courts would be slow to adopt. The distinction is this: That if the officer or functionary whose conduct is in question is one in whose duties

¹ In *Kelley v. Sherlock*, Law Rep. 1 Q. B. 686, it was held that a sermon commenting upon public affairs — *e. g.* the appointment of chaplains for prisons and the election of a Jew for mayor — was a proper subject for comment in the papers. And in *Kelley v. Tinning*, Law Rep. 1 Q. B. 699, a church-warden, having written to the plaintiff, the incumbent, accusing him of having desecrated the church by allowing books to be sold in it during service, and by turning the vestry-room into a cooking-apartment, the correspondence was published without the plaintiff's permission in the defendant's newspaper, with comments on the plaintiff's conduct. *Held*, that this was a matter of public interest, which might be made the subject of public discussion; and that the publication was therefore not libellous, unless the language used was stronger than, in the opinion of the jury, the occasion justified.

In *Wason v. Walter*, L. R. 4 Q. B. 73, the proprietor of the "London

Times" was prosecuted for comments in his paper upon a debate in the House of Lords. The plaintiff had presented a petition to that body, charging Sir Fitzroy Kelly with having, many years before, made a statement false to his own knowledge, in order to deceive a committee of the House of Commons; and praying inquiry, and his removal from an office he held, if the charge was found true. A debate ensued, and the charge was wholly refuted. *Held*, that this was a subject of great public concern, on which a writer in a public newspaper had full right to comment; and the occasion was therefore so far privileged that the comments would not be actionable so long as a jury should think them honest, and made in a fair spirit, and such as were justified by the circumstances disclosed in the debate. The opinion by Chief Justice *Cockburn* is very clear and pointed, and reviews all the previous decisions. See further, *Fairchild v. Adams*, 11 Cush. 549; *Terry v. Fellows*, 21 La. Ann. 375.

the general public, and not merely the local public, has an interest, then a discussion of his conduct is privileged; otherwise it is not. Thus the public journals are privileged to comment freely within the limits of good faith, on the manner in which a judge performs his duties, but they are not privileged in like manner in the case of an official charged with purely local duties, such, for instance, as the physician to a local public charity. We cannot believe there is any sufficient reason for allowing free discussion in the one case and not in the other; but the opinion is of sufficient importance to justify special attention being directed to it.¹ And in this country it has been held that where a charge against an officer or a candidate respects only his qualifications for the office, and does not impugn his character, it forms no basis for a recovery of damages. To address to the electors of a district letters charging that a candidate for office is of impaired understanding, and his mind weakened by disease, is presenting that subject to "the proper and legitimate tribunal to try the question." "Talents and qualifications for office are mere matters of opinion, of which the electors are the only competent judges."²

Statements in the Course of Judicial Proceedings.

There are some cases which are so absolutely privileged on reasons of public policy, that no inquiry into motives is permitted in an action for slander or libel. Of these, the case of a party who is called upon to give evidence in the course of judicial proceedings is a familiar illustration. No action will lie against a witness at the suit of a party aggrieved by his false testimony, even though malice be charged.³ The remedy against

¹ Purcell v. Lowler, L. R. 1 C. P. Div. 781. The plaintiff was medical officer of the Kuntsford workhouse, and the alleged libel consisted in a report of an inquiry by the board in charge into his conduct and the treatment of the poor under him, and comments thereon. The following cases are commented upon and distinguished: Davis v. Duncan, 9 C. P. 396; Kelly v. Tinling, L. R. 1 Q. B. 699; Henwood v. Harrison, L. R. 7

C. P. 606; Wason v. Walter, L. R. 4 Q. B. 73. It is clear that a trustee of a mining corporation is not such an officer as to be subjected to general criticism under the privilege of the press. Wilson v. Fitch, 41 Cal. 363.

² Mayrant v. Richardson, 1 Nott & McCord, 348.

³ Marsh v. Ellsworth, 50 N. Y. 309; Terry v. Fellows, 21 La. Ann. 375; Smith v. Howard, 28 Iowa, 51.

a dishonest witness is confined to the criminal prosecution for perjury.¹ So what a juror may say to his fellows in the jury-room while they are considering their verdict, concerning one of the parties to the suit who has been a witness therein, cannot be the subject of an action for slander.² False accusations, however, contained in the affidavits or other proceedings, by [* 442] which a prosecution is commenced for supposed crime, * or in any other papers in the course of judicial proceedings, are not so absolutely protected. They are privileged,³ but the party making them is liable to action, if actual malice be averred and proved.⁴ Preliminary information, furnished with a view to set on foot an inquiry into an alleged offence, or to institute a criminal prosecution, is, in like manner, privileged;⁵ but the

¹ But a qualification of this rule is made where what is said by the witness is not pertinent or material to the cause, and he has been actuated by malice in stating it. *White v. Carroll*, 42 N. Y. 166; s. c. 1 Am. Rep. 504; *Barnes v. McCrate*, 32 Me. 442; *Kidder v. Parkhurst*, 8 Allen, 393. He is not, however, to be himself the judge of what is pertinent or material when questions are put to him, and no objection or warning comes to him from court or counsel. *Calkins v. Sumner*, 13 Wis. 198. See also *Warner v. Paine*, 2 Sandf. 195; *Garr v. Selden*, 4 N. Y. 91; *Jennings v. Paine*, 4 Wis. 358; *Perkins v. Mitchell*, 31 Barb. 461; *Revis v. Smith*, 18 C. B. 126; *Grove v. Brandenburg*, 7 Black, 234; *Cunningham v. Brown*, 18 Vt. 123; *Dunlap v. Glidden*, 31 Me. 435.

² *Dunham v. Powers*, 42 Vt. 1; *Rector v. Smith*, 11 Iowa, 302.

³ *Astley v. Younge*, Burr. 807; *Strauss v. Meyer*, 48 Ill. 385.

⁴ *Padmore v. Lawrence*, 11 Ad. & El. 380; *Kine v. Sewell*, 3 M. & W. 297; *Burlingame v. Burlingame*, 8 Cow. 141; *Kidder v. Parkhurst*, 8 Allen, 393; *Doyle v. O'Doherty*, 1 Car. & Marsh. 418; *Wilson v. Collins*, 5 C. & P. 373; *Home v. Bentinck*, 2 Brod. & Bing 130;

Jarvis v. Hatheway, 3 Johns. 180. In *Goslin v. Cannon*, 1 Harr. 3, it was held that where a crime had been committed, expressions of opinion founded upon facts within the knowledge of the party, or communicated to him, made prudently and in confidence, to discreet persons, and made obviously in good faith with a view only to direct their watchfulness, and enlist their aid in recovering the money stolen, and detecting and bringing to justice the offender, were privileged. The cause, occasion, object, and end, it was said, was justifiable, proper, and legal, and such as should actuate every good citizen. If a party in presenting his case to a court, wanders from what is material to libel another, the libel is not privileged. *Wyatt v. Buell*, 47 Cal. 624.

⁵ *Grimes v. Coyle*, 6 B. Mour. 301. The subject of communications privileged on grounds of public policy will be found considered, at some length and with much ability, in the recent case of *Dawkins v. Lord Paulet*, Law Rep. 5 C. B. 94. The publication complained of was by a military officer to his superior concerning the qualifications and capacity of the plaintiff as a subordinate military officer under him; and it was averred that the words were published by the

protection only extends to those communications which are in the course of the proceedings to bring the supposed offender to justice, or are designed for the purpose of originating or forwarding such proceedings ; and communications not of that character are not protected, even although judicial proceedings may be pending for the investigation of the offence which the communication refers to.¹ Still less would a party be justified in repeating a charge of crime, after the person charged has been examined on his complaint, and acquitted of all guilt.²

Privilege of Counsel.

One of the most important cases of privilege, in a constitutional point of view, is that of counsel employed to represent a party in *judicial proceedings. The benefit of [* 443] the constitutional right to counsel depends very greatly on the freedom with which he is allowed to act, and to comment on the facts appearing in the case, and on the inferences deducible therefrom. The character, conduct, and motives of parties and their witnesses, as well as of other persons more remotely connected with the proceedings, enter very largely into any

defendant of actual malice, and without any reasonable, probable, or justifiable cause, and not *bona fide*, or in the *bona fide* discharge of defendant's duty as superior officer. On demurrer, a majority of the court (*Mellor and Lush*, JJ.) held the action would not lie: planting themselves, in part, on grounds of public policy, and in part, also, on the fact that the military code provided a remedy for wrongs of the nature complained of; and quoting with approval *Johnstone v. Sutton*, 1 T. R. 544, and *Dawkins v. Lord Rokeby*, 4 F. & F. 841. *Cockburn*, Ch. J., delivered an able dissenting opinion.

¹ *Danaster v. Hewson*, 2 M. & Ry. 176. As to the privilege connected with church trials and investigations, see *Dunn v. Winters*, 2 Humph. 512; *York v. Pease*, 2 Gray, 282.

² *Burlingame v. Burlingame*, 8 Cow. 141. In *Mower v. Watson*, 11 Vt. 536, an action was brought for slander in saying to a witness who was giving his testimony on a material point in a cause then on trial to which defendant was a party, "That's a lie," and for repeating the same statement to counsel for the opposite party afterwards. The words were held not to be privileged. To the same effect are the cases of *McClaghry v. Wetmore*, 6 Johns. 82, and *Kean v. McLaughlin*, 2 S. & R. 469. See also *Torrey v. Field*, 10 Vt. 353; *Gilbert v. People*, 1 Denio, 41. A report made by a grand jury upon a subject which they conceive to be within their jurisdiction, but which is not, is nevertheless privileged. *Rector v. Smith*, 11 Iowa, 302.

judicial inquiry, and must form the subject of comment, if they are to be sifted and weighed. To make the comment of value, there must be the liberty of examination in every possible light, and of suggesting any view of the circumstances of the case, and of the motives surrounding it, which seems legitimate to the person discussing them. It will often happen, in criminal proceedings, that, while no reasonable doubt can exist that a crime has been committed, there may be very great doubt whether the prosecutor or the accused is the guilty party; and to confine the counsel for the defence to such remarks concerning the prosecutor as he might justify, if he had made them without special occasion, would render the right to counsel, in many cases, of no value. The law justly and necessarily, in view of the importance of the privilege, allows very great liberty in these cases, and surrounds them with a protection that is always a complete shield, except where the privilege of counsel has been plainly and palpably abused.

The rule upon this subject was laid down in these words in an early English case: "A counsellor hath privilege to enforce any thing which is informed him by his client, and to give it in evidence, it being pertinent to the matter in question, and not to examine whether it be true or false; for a counsellor is at his peril to give in evidence that which his client informs him, being pertinent to the matter in question; but matter not pertinent to the issue, or the matter in question, he need not deliver; for he is to discern in his discretion what he is to deliver, and what not; and although it be false, he is excusable, it being pertinent to the matter. But if he give in evidence any thing not material to the issue, which is scandalous, he ought to aver it to be true; otherwise he is punishable; for it shall be considered as spoken maliciously and without cause; which is a good ground for the action. . . . So if counsel object matter against a witness which is slanderous, if there be cause to discredit his testimony, and it be pertinent to the matter in question, it is justifiable, what he *delivers by information, although it be false."¹ The privilege of counsel in these cases is the

¹ *Brook v. Montagne*, Cro. Jac. Ald. 232. And see *Mackay v. Ford*, 90. See this case approved and applied in *Hodgson v. Scarlett*, 1 B. & 5 H. & N. 792.

same with that of the party himself,¹ and the limitation upon it is concisely suggested in a Pennsylvania case, "that if a man should abuse his privilege, and, under pretence of pleading his cause, designedly wander from the point in question, and maliciously heap slander upon his adversary, I will not say that he is not responsible in an action at law."² Chief Justice *Shaw* has stated the rule very fully and clearly: "We take the rule to be well settled by the authorities, that words spoken in the course of judicial proceedings, though they are such as impute crime to another, and therefore, if spoken elsewhere, would import malice and be actionable in themselves, are not actionable, if they are applicable and pertinent to the subject of the inquiry. The question, therefore, in such cases is, not whether the words spoken are true, not whether they are actionable in themselves, but whether they were spoken in the course of judicial proceedings, and whether they are relevant or pertinent to the cause or subject of the inquiry. And in determining what is pertinent, much latitude must be allowed to the judgment and discretion of those who are intrusted with the conduct of a cause in court, and a much larger allowance made for the ardent and excited feelings with which a party, or counsel who naturally and almost necessarily identifies himself with his client, may become animated, by constantly regarding one side only of an interesting and animated controversy, in which the dearest rights of such party may become involved. And if these feelings sometimes manifest themselves in strong invectives, or exaggerated expressions, beyond what the occasion would strictly justify, it is to be recollected that this is said to a judge who hears both sides, in whose mind the exaggerated statement may be at once controlled and met by evidence and argument of a contrary tendency from the other party, and who, from the impartiality of his position, will naturally give to an exaggerated assertion, not warranted by the occasion, no more weight than it deserves. Still, this privilege must be restrained by some limit, and we consider that limit to be this: that a party or counsel shall not avail himself of his situation to * gratify private malice by uttering slanderous expressions, either against a party, witness, or third person, which have no relation to the cause or subject-

¹ *Hoar v. Wood*, 3 Met. 194, per *Shaw*, Ch. J.

² *McMillan v. Birch*, 1 Binney, 178, per *Tilghman*, Ch. J.

matter of the inquiry. Subject to this restriction, it is, on the whole, for the public interest, and best calculated to subserve the purposes of justice, to allow counsel full freedom of speech in conducting the cases and advocating and sustaining the rights of their constituents; and this freedom of discussion ought not to be impaired by numerous and refined distinctions."¹

Privilege of Legislators.

The privilege of a legislator in the use of language in debate is made broader and more complete than that of the counsel or party in judicial proceedings by constitutional provisions, which give him complete immunity, by forbidding his being questioned in any other place for any thing said in speech or debate.² In an early case in Massachusetts, the question of the extent of this constitutional privilege came before the Supreme Court, and was largely discussed, as well by counsel as by the court. The constitutional provision then in force in that State was as follows: "The freedom of deliberation, speech, and debate in either house cannot be the foundation of any accusation or prosecution, action or complaint, in any other court or place whatsoever." The defendant was a member of the General Court, and was prosecuted for uttering slanderous words to a fellow-member in relation to the plaintiff. The member to whom the words were uttered had moved a resolution, on the suggestion of the plaintiff, for the appointment of an additional notary-public in the county

¹ Hoar v. Wood, 3 Met. 197. See also Padmore v. Lawrence, 11 Ad. & El. 380; Ring v. Wheeler, 7 Cow. 725; Mower v. Watson, 11 Vt. 536; Gilbert v. People, 1 Denio, 41; Hastings v. Lusk, 22 Wend. 410; Bradley v. Heath, 12 Pick. 163; Lea v. White, 4 Sneed, 111; Marshall v. Gunter, 6 Rich. 419; Ruohs v. Backer, 6 Heisk. 395; Jennings v. Paine, 4 Wis. 358; Lawson v. Hicks, 38 Ala. 279; Lester v. Thurmond, 51 Geo. 118. In Hastings v. Lusk, it is said that the privilege of counsel is as broad as that of a legislative body; however false and malicious may be the charge made by him affecting the reputation

of another, an action of slander will not lie, provided what is said be pertinent to the question under discussion. And see Warner v. Paine, 2 Sandf. 195; Garr v. Selden, 4 N. Y. 91; Jennings v. Paine, 4 Wis. 358.

² There are provisions to this effect in every State constitution except those of North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Texas, California, and Nevada. Mr. Cushing, in his work on the Law and Practice of Legislative Assemblies, § 602, has expressed the opinion that these provisions were unnecessary, and that the protection was equally complete without them.

where the plaintiff * resided. The mover, in reply to an in- [* 446] quiry privately made by defendant, as to the source of his information that such appointment was necessary, had designated the plaintiff, and the defendant had replied by a charge against the plaintiff of a criminal offence. The question before the court was, whether this reply was privileged. The house was in session at the time, but the remark was not made in course of speech or debate, and had no other connection with the legislative proceedings than is above shown.

Referring to the constitutional provision quoted, the learned judge who delivered the opinion of the court in this case thus expressed himself: "In considering this article, it appears to me that the privilege secured by it is not so much the privilege of the house as an organized body, as of each individual member composing it, who is entitled to this privilege, even against the declared will of the house. For he does not hold this privilege at the pleasure of the house, but derives it from the will of the people, expressed in the constitution, which is paramount to the will of either or both branches of the legislature. In this respect, the privilege here secured resembles other privileges attached to each member by another part of the constitution, by which he is exempted from arrest on mesne (or original) process, during his going to, returning from, or attending the General Court. Of these privileges, thus secured to each member, he cannot be deprived by a resolve of the house, or by an act of the legislature.

"These privileges are thus secured, not with the intention of protecting the members against prosecutions for their own benefit, but to support the rights of the people, by enabling their representatives to execute the functions of their office without fear of prosecution, civil or criminal. I therefore think the article ought not to be construed strictly, but liberally, that the full design of it may be answered. I will not confine it to delivering an opinion, uttering a speech, or haranguing in debate, but will extend it to the giving of a vote, to the making of a written report, and to every other act resulting from the nature and in the execution of the office; and I would define the article as securing to every member exemption from prosecution for every thing said or done by him, as a representative, in the exercise of the functions of that office, without inquiring whether the exercise was regular

** Publication of Privileged Communications through the [* 448] Press.*

If now we turn from the rules of law which protect communications because of the occasion on which they are made and the duty resting upon the person making them, to those rules which concern the spreading before the world the same communications, we shall discover a very remarkable difference. It does not follow because a counsel may freely speak in court as he believes or is instructed, that therefore he may publish his speech through the public press. The privilege in court is necessary to the complete discharge of his duty to his client; but when the suit is ended, that duty is discharged, and he is not called upon to appeal from the court and the jury to the general public. Indeed such an appeal, while it could not generally have benefit to the client in view, would be unfair and injurious to the parties reflected upon by the argument, inasmuch as it would take only a partial and one-sided view of the case, and the public would not have, as the court and jury did, all the facts of the case as given in evidence before them, so that they might be in position to weigh the arguments fairly and understandingly, and reject injurious inferences not warranted by the evidence.

The law, however, favors publicity in legal proceedings, so far as that object can be attained without injustice to the persons immediately concerned. The public are permitted to attend nearly all judicial inquiries, and there appears to be no sufficient reason why they should not also be allowed to see in print the reports of trials, if they can thus have them presented as fully as they are in court, or at least all the material portion of the proceedings stated impartially, so that one shall not, by means of them, derive erroneous impressions, which he would not have received from hearing the case in court.

It seems to be a settled rule of law, that a fair and impartial account of judicial proceedings, which have not been *ex parte*, but in the hearing of both parties, is, generally speaking, a justifiable publication.¹ But it is said that, if a party is to be allowed

¹ Hoare v. Silverlock, 9 C. B. 20; And see Stanley v. Webb, 4 Sandf. Lewis v. Levy, E. B. & E. 537; Ry- 21; Cincinnati Gazette Co. v. Tim- alls v. Leader, Law Rep. 1 Exch. 296. berlake, 10 Ohio, n. s. 548; Torrey

to publish what passes in a court of justice, he must publish the whole case, and not merely state the conclusion which he himself draws from the evidence.¹ A plea that the supposed libel was, in substance, a true account and report of a trial has been held bad;² and a statement of the circumstances of a trial as from counsel in the case has been held not privileged.³ The report must also be strictly confined to the actual proceedings in court, and must contain no defamatory observations or comments from any quarter whatsoever, in addition to what forms strictly and properly the legal proceedings.⁴ And if the nature of the case is such as to make it improper that the proceedings should be spread before the public, because of their immoral tendency, or of the blasphemous or indecent character of the evidence exhibited, the publication, though impartial and full, will be a public offence, and punishable accordingly.⁵

It has, however, been held, that the publication of *ex parte* proceedings, or mere preliminary examinations, though of a judicial character, is not privileged; and when they reflect injuriously upon individuals, the publisher derives no protection from their having already been delivered in court.⁶ The reason for

v. Field, 10 Vt. 353; *Saunders v. Baxter*, 6 Heisk. 369; *Storey v. Wallace*, 60 Ill. 51. But not if the matter published is indecent or blasphemous. *Rex v. Carlile*, 3 B. & Ald. 187; *Rex v. Creevey*, 1 M. & S. 273. The privilege extends to the publication of testimony taken on an investigation by Congress. *Terry v. Fellows*, 21 La. Ann. 375. And of the proceedings on trials in voluntary organizations. *Barrows v. Bell*, 7 Gray, 301.

¹ *Lewis v. Walter*, 4 B. & Ald. 611.

² *Flint v. Pike*, 4 B. & C. 473.

³ *Saunders v. Mills*, 6 Bing. 213; *Flint v. Pike*, 4 B. & C. 473. And see *Stanley v. Webb*, 4 Sandf. 26; *Lewis v. Walter*, 4 B. & Ald. 605.

⁴ *Stiles v. Nokes*, 7 East, 493; *Delegal v. Highley*, 3 Bing. N. C. 960. And see *Lewis v. Clement*, 3

B. & Ald. 702; *Pittock v. O'Neill*, 63 Penn. St. 253; s. c. 3 Am. Rep. 544.

⁵ *Rex v. Carlile*, 3 B. & Ald. 187; *Rex v. Creevey*, 1 M. & S. 273.

⁶ *Duncan v. Thwaites*, 3 B. & C. 556; *Flint v. Pike*, 4 B. & C. 473; *Charlton v. Watton*, 6 C. & P. 385; *Rex v. Lee*, 5 Esp. 123; *Rex v. Fisher*, 2 Camp. 563; *Delegal v. Highley*, 3 Bing. N. C. 950; *Behrens v. Allen*, 3 Fost. & F. 135, *Cincinnati Gazette Co. v. Timberlake*, 10 Ohio, n. s. 548; *Mathews v. Beach*, 5 Sandf. 256; *Huff v. Bennett*, 4 Sandf. 120; *Stanley v. Webb*, 4 Sandf. 120; *Usher v. Severance*, 20 Me. 9. It seems, however, that if the proceeding has resulted in the discharge of the person accused, or in a decision that no cause exists for proceeding against him, a publication of an account of it is privileged. In *Curry v. Walter*, 1

* distinguishing these cases from those where the parties [* 450] are heard is thus stated by Lord *Ellenborough*, in the early case of *The King v. Fisher*:¹ “Jurors and judges are still but men; they cannot always control feeling excited by inflammatory language. If they are exposed to be thus warped and misled, it is justice must sometimes be done. Trials at law, fairly reported, although they may occasionally prove injurious to individual have been held to be privileged. Let them continue so privileged. The benefit they produce is great and permanent, and the ev

B. & P. 525, the Court of Common Pleas held that, in an action for libel, it was a good defence, under the plea of not guilty, that the alleged libel was a true account of what had passed upon a motion in the Court of King’s Bench for an information against two magistrates for corruption in refusing to license an inn; the motion having been refused for want of notice to the magistrates. In *Lewis v. Levy*, El. Bl. & El. 537, the publisher of a newspaper gave a full report of an examination before a magistrate on a charge of perjury, resulting in the discharge of the defendant; and the Court of Queen’s Bench sustained the claim of privilege; distinguishing the case from those where the party was held for trial, and where the publication of the charges and evidence might tend to his prejudice on the trial. The opinion of Lord *Campbell* in the case, however, seems to go far towards questioning the correctness of the decisions above cited. See especially his quotation from the opinion of Lord *Denman*, delivered before a committee of the House of Lords in the year 1843, on the law of libel: “I have no doubt that [police reports] are extremely useful for the detection of guilt by making facts notorious, and for bringing those facts more correctly to the knowledge of all parties interested in unravelling the truth. The public, I think, are perfectly aware that those proceedings are *ex parte*, and they become more

and more aware of it in proportion to their growing intelligence; they know that such proceedings are only a course of trial, and they do not form their opinion until the trial is had. Perfect publicity in judicial proceedings is of the highest importance on other points of view, but in its effect on character I think it desirable. The statement made in open court will probably find its way to the ears of all in whose good opinion the party assailed feels an interest, probably in an exaggerated form, and the imputation may often rest upon the wrong person; both these evils are prevented by correct reports.” In the case of *Lewis v. Levy*, it was insisted that the privilege of publication only extended to the proceedings in the superior courts of law and equity; but the court gave no countenance to any such distinction. See also *Wason v. Walter*, L. R. Q. B. 73; *Terry v. Fellows*, 21 L. Ann. 375.

¹ 2 Camp. 563. Compare with this and the cases cited in the preceding note, *Ryalls v. Leader*, L. R. 1 Exch. 295; *Smith v. Scott*, 2 C. K. 580; *Ackerman v. Jones*, 37 N. J. Sup. C. R. 42. It is clear that the report is not privileged, if accompanied with injurious comment. *Stiles v. Nokes*, 7 East, 493; *Commonwealth v. Blanding*, 3 Pick. 30; *Usher v. Severance*, 20 Me. 9; *Pittox v. O’Niell*, 63 Penn. St. 253.

told that if the law were not thus indulgent, some legislative relief might become necessary for the protection of this class of citizens. *Undoubtedly if it be desirable to pamper a depraved public appetite or taste*, if there be any such, by the republication of all the falsehoods and calumnies upon private character that may find their way into the press, — to give encouragement to the widest possible circulation of these vile and defamatory publications by protecting the retailers of them, — some legislative interference will be necessary, for no countenance can be found for the irresponsibility claimed in the common law. That reprobates the libeller, whether author or publisher, and subjects him to both civil and criminal responsibility. His offence is there ranked with that of the receiver of stolen goods, the perjurer and suborner of perjury, the disturber of the public peace, the conspirator, and other offenders of like character.” And again: “The act of publication is an adoption of the original calumny, which must be defended in the same way as if invented by the defendant. The republication assumes and indorses the truth of the charge, and when called on by the aggrieved party, the publisher should be held strictly to the proof. If he chooses to become the indorser and retailer of private scandal, without taking the trouble to inquire into the truth of what he publishes, there is no ground for * complaint if the law, which is as studious to [* 454] protect the character as the property of a citizen, holds him to this responsibility. The rule is not only just and wise in itself, but, if steadily and inflexibly adhered to and applied by courts and juries, will greatly tend to the promotion of truth, good morals, and common decency on the part of the press, by inculcating caution and inquiry into the truth of charges against private character before they are published and circulated throughout the community.”¹

¹ Hotchkiss v. Oliphant, 2 Hill, 513, per Nelson, Ch. J. And see King v. Root, 4 Wend. 138, per Walworth, Chancellor. “It has been urged upon you that conductors of the public press are entitled to peculiar indulgences and have especial rights and privileges. The law recognizes no such peculiar rights, privileges, or claims to indulgence. They have no rights but such as are com-

mon to all. They have just the same rights that the rest of the community have, and no more. They have the right to publish the truth, but no right to publish falsehood to the injury of others with impunity.” Instructions approved in Sheckell v. Jackson, 10 Cush. 26. And see Palmer v. Concord, 48 N. H. 216. In People v. Wilson, 64 Ill. 195, a publication regarding a pending cause cal-

The question, however, is not new, and the authorities have generally held the publisher of a paper to the same rigid responsibility with any other person who makes injurious communications. Malice on his part is conclusively inferred, if the communications are false. It is no defence that they have been copied with or without comment from another paper;¹ or that the source of the information was stated at the time of the publication;² or that the publication was made in the paper without the knowledge of the proprietor, as an advertisement or otherwise;³ or that it consists in a criticism on the course and character of a candidate for public office;⁴ or that it is a correct and impartial ac-

¹ *Hotchkiss v. Oliphant*, 2 Hill, 510. Even though they be preceded by the statement that they are so copied. *Sanford v. Bennett*, 24 N. Y. 20. Or are given as a rumor merely. *Wheeler v. Shields*, 3 Ill. 348; *Mason v. Mason*, 4 N. H. 110. See *State v. Butman*, 15 La. Ann. 166; *Parker v. McQueen*, 8 B. Monr. 16; *Sans v. Joerris*, 14 Wis. 663; *Hampton v. Wilson*, 4 Dev. 468; *Beardsley v. Bridgman*, 17 Iowa, 290.

² *Dole v. Lyon*, 10 Johns. 447; *Mapes v. Weeks*, 4 Wend. 659; *Inman v. Foster*, 8 Wend. 602; *Hotchkiss v. Oliphant*, 2 Hill, 514; *Cates v. Kellogg*, 9 Ind. 506; *Fowler v. Chichester*, 26 Ohio, n. s. 9; *Cummerford v. McAvoy*, 15 Ill. 311.

³ *Andres v. Wells*, 7 Johns. 260; *Huff v. Bennett*, 4 Sandf. 120; s. c. 6 N. Y. 337; *Marten v. Van Schaick*, 4 Paige, 479; *Commonwealth v. Nichols*, 10 Met. 259.

⁴ *King v. Root*, 4 Wend. 113. The action was for a libel, published in the "New York American," reflecting upon Root, who was candidate for lieutenant-governor. We quote from the opinion of the chancellor: "It is insisted that this libel was a privileged communication. If so, the defendants were under no obligation to prove the truth of the charge, and the party libelled had no right to recover, unless he established

malice in fact, or showed that the editors knew the charge to be false. The effect of such a doctrine would be deplorable. Instead of protecting, it would be destroying the freedom of the press, if it were understood that an editor could publish what he pleased against candidates for office, without being answerable for the truth of such publications. No honest man could afford to be an editor, and no man who had any character to lose would be a candidate for office under such a construction of the law of libel. The only safe rule to adopt in such cases is to permit editors to publish what they please in relation to the character and qualifications of candidates for office, but holding them responsible for the truth of what they publish." Notwithstanding the deplorable consequences here predicted from too great license to the press, it is matter of daily observation that the press, in its comments upon public events and public men, proceeds in all respects as though it were privileged; public opinion would not sanction prosecutions by candidates for office for publications amounting to technical libels, but which were nevertheless published without malice in fact; and the man who has a "character to lose" presents himself for the suffrages of his fellow-citizens in the full reliance that detraction by

[* 456] count of a public * meeting,¹ or of any proceedings in which the public have an interest, unless they were legislative or judicial in their character, and where both parties had opportunity to be heard.² Criticisms on * works of art and literary productions are allowable, if fair, rea-

the public press will be corrected through the same instrumentality, and that unmerited abuse will react on the public opinion in his favor. Meantime the press is gradually becoming more just, liberal, and dignified in its dealings with political opponents, and vituperation is much less common, reckless, and bitter now that it was at the beginning of the century, when repression was more often resorted to as a remedy.

¹ Dawson v. Duncan, 7 El. & Bl. 229.

² Sanford v. Bennett, 24 N. Y. 20. Bennett was sued for publishing in the "New York Herald" the speech of a person convicted of murder, made upon the scaffold as he was about to be executed, and reflecting upon the counsel who had defended him. The principal question in the case was, whether a statute of the State, passed after the publication but before the trial, was applicable. The statute privileged any fair and true report in a newspaper, of a judicial, legislative, or other public official proceeding, or statement, speech, argument, or debate in the course of the same. The court held the statute not applicable, both because it was not retrospective in its provisions, and therefore could not apply to publications previously made, and also because this was not any such proceeding as the statute contemplated. Upon the question whether the publication was not privileged, independent of the statute, *Denio, J.*, says: "The want of legal connection between the words spoken and the proceeding which was going forward at the same time and place, which has led me to the con-

clusion that the statute does not apply, shows that it is not within the reason upon which the common-law rule is based. That rule assumes that the public may have a legitimate interest in being made acquainted with the proceedings of courts of justice and of legislative bodies. The free circulation of such intelligence is of vast advantage in every country, and particularly here, where all reforms in legal or administrative polity must proceed from the people at large. But neither the reason of the rule, nor, as I believe, the rule itself, has any application to a proceeding in which neither forensic debate nor legislative or administrative deliberations or determinations have any place. Where the proceeding is a mere act, with which neither oral nor written communications have any thing more than an accidental or fortuitous connection, there is no room for the application of the doctrine of privilege to whatever may be spoken or written at the time and place where and when it is transpiring. Such transactions are subject to be reported, described, and published in newspapers or otherwise, like other affairs in which individuals and communities feel a curiosity, and with the same liability attaching to the publisher to answer for any injury which may happen to the character of individuals if, in the course of such publications, libellous imputations are applied to any one. It is of course perfectly lawful to publish all the circumstances attending a public execution, including the dying speech of the malefactor; but it is a necessary condition of that right, that if scanda-

sonable, and temperate; but the artist or author is not to be criticised through his works, and his personal character is not made the property of the public by his publications.¹ For further privilege it would seem that publishers of news must appeal to the protection of public opinion, or they must call upon the legislature for such modification of the law as may seem important to their just protection.

The publisher of a newspaper, however, though responsible for all the actual damage which a party may suffer in consequence of injurious publications in his paper, cannot properly be made liable for exemplary or vindictive damages, where the article complained of was inserted in his paper without his personal knowledge, and he has been guilty of no negligence in the selection of agents, or of personal misconduct, and is not shown habitually to make his paper the vehicle of detraction and malice.²

Publication of Legislative Proceedings.

Although debates, reports, and other proceedings in legislative bodies are privileged, it does not seem to follow that the publication of them is always equally privileged. The English decisions do not place such publications on any higher ground of right than any other communication through the public press. A member of Parliament, it is said, has a right to publish his speech, but it

lous imputations are used by the culprit or any one else which are untrue, he who publishes them afterwards must be responsible for the wrong and injury thereby occasioned to the person attacked." *Mason, J.*, in the same case gives a reason for concurring in the conclusion of the court, which seems to us to possess some force, independent of the question of privilege. It is that the provisions of law then in force, requiring capital executions to be within the walls of the prison, or in an adjoining enclosure, and excluding all spectators with limited exceptions, must be regarded as indicating a legislative policy adverse to the publicity of what passes on such occasions.

¹ The libel suits brought by J.

Fenimore Cooper may be usefully consulted in this connection. *Cooper v. Stone*, 24 Wend. 434; *Cooper v. Barber*, 24 Wend. 105; *Cooper v. Greeley*, 1 Denio, 347. As to criticisms on public entertainments, see *Fry v. Bennett*, 5 Sandf. 54, and 28 N. Y. 324; *Dibdin v. Swan*, 1 Esp. 28; *Green v. Chapman*, 4 Bing. N. C. 92. As to how far sermons, preached, but not otherwise published, form a proper subject for comment and criticism by the public press, see *Gathercole v. Miall*, 15 M. & W. 318.

² *Daily Post Co. v. McArthur*, and *Detroit Free Press v. Same*, 16 Mich. 447; *Perret v. New Orleans Times*, 25 La. Ann. 170; *Scripps v. Reilly*, 35 Mich. 371; *Same v. Same*, 37 Mich.

must not be made the vehicle of slander against any individual, and if it is, it is a libel.¹ And in another case: "A member of [* 458] the House of Commons] has spoken what he thought material, and what he was at liberty to speak, in his character as a member of that house. So far he is privileged; but he has not stopped there, but, unauthorized by the house, has chosen to publish an account of that speech, in what he has pleased to call a corrected form, and in that publication has thrown out reflections injurious to the character of an individual." And he was convicted and fined for the libel.²

The circumstance that the publication was unauthorized by the house was alluded to in this opinion, but the rule of law would seem to be unaffected by it, since it was afterwards held that an order of the house directing a report made to it to be published did not constitute any protection to the official printer, who had published it in the regular course of his duty, in compliance with such order. All the power of the house was not sufficient to protect its printer in obeying the order to make this publication; and a statute was therefore passed to protect in the future persons publishing parliamentary reports, votes, or other proceedings, by order of either house.³

¹ *Rex v. Lord Abington*, 1 Esp. 226. In this case the defendant was fined, imprisoned, and required to find security for his good behavior, for a libel contained in a speech made by him in Parliament, and afterwards published.

² *Rex v. Creevey*, 1 M. & S. 278.

³ Stat. 3 and 4 Victoria, c. 9. The case was that of *Stockdale v. Hansard*, very fully reported in 9 Al. & El. 1. See also 11 Al. & El. 253. The Messrs. Hansard were printers to the House of Commons, and had printed by order of that house the report of the inspectors of prisons, in which a book, published by Stockdale, and found among the prisoners in Newgate, was described as obscene and indecent. Stockdale brought an action against the printers for libel, and recovered judgment. Lord Denman, presiding on the trial, said that "the fact of the House of Commons having

directed Messrs. Hansard to publish all their parliamentary reports is no justification for them, or for any bookseller who publishes any parliamentary report containing a libel against any man." The house resented this opinion and resolved, "that the power of publishing such of its reports, votes, and proceedings as it shall deem necessary or conducive to the public interests is an essential incident to the constitutional functions of Parliament, more especially of this house as the representative portion of it." They also resolved that for any person to institute a suit in order to call in question the privileges in question, or for any court to decide upon matters of privilege inconsistent with the determination of either house, was a breach of privilege. Stockdale, however, brought other actions, and again recovered. When he sought to enforce

* It has been intimated, however, that what a representative is privileged to address to the house of which he is

these judgments by executions, his solicitor and himself were proceeded against for contempt of the house, and imprisoned. While in prison, Stockdale commenced a further suit. The sheriffs, who had been ordered by the House of Commons to restore the money which they had collected, were, on the other hand, compelled by attachments from the Queen's Bench to pay it over to Stockdale. In this complicated state of affairs, the proper and dignified mode of relieving the difficulty by the passage of a statute making such publications privileged for the future was adopted. For an account of this controversy, in addition to what appears in the law reports, see May, *Law and Practice of Parliament*, 156-159, 2d ed.; May, *Constitutional History*, c. 7. A case in some respects similar to that of *Stockdale v. Hansard* is that of *Popham v. Pickburn*, 7 Hurl. & Nor. 891. The defendant, the proprietor of a newspaper, was sued for publishing a report made by a medical officer of health to a vestry board, in pursuance of the statute, and which reflected severely upon the conduct of the plaintiff. The publication was made without any comment, and as a part of the proceedings of the vestry board. It was held not to be privileged, notwithstanding the statute provided for the publication of the report by the vestry board, — which, however, had not yet been made. *Wilde, B.*, delivering the opinion of the court, said: "The defendant has published that of the plaintiff which is undoubtedly a libel, and which is untrue. He seeks to protect himself on the ground that the publication is a correct report of a document read at a meeting of the Clerkenwell vestry, which document must have been published and sold at a small price by the vestry in

a short time. But we are of opinion this furnishes no defence. Undoubtedly the report of a trial in a court of justice in which this document had been read would not make the publisher thereof liable to an action for libel, and reasonably, for such reports only extend that publicity which is so important a feature of the administration of the law in England, and thus enable to be witnesses of it not merely the few whom the court can hold, but the thousands who can read the reports. But no case has decided that the reports of what takes place at the meeting of such a body as this vestry are so privileged; indeed the case cited in the argument [*Rex v. Wright*, 8 T. R. 293] is an authority that they are not. Then, is the publication justified by the statute? It is true that the document would have been accessible to the public in a short time, though not published by the defendant; but this cannot justify his anticipating the publication, and giving it a wider circulation, and possibly without an answer which the vestry might have received in some subsequent report or otherwise, and which would then have been circulated with the libel. This defence therefore fails.

"It was further contended that this libel might be justified as a matter of public discussion on a subject of public interest. The answer is: This is not a discussion or comment. It is the statement of a fact. To charge a man incorrectly with a disgraceful act is very different from commenting on a fact relating to him truly stated; there the writer may, by his opinion, libel himself rather than the subject of his remarks.

"It is to be further observed that this decision does not determine or affect the question whether, after the

or a motion in arrest of judgment. His charge obviously required the jury, if satisfied the publication was made, and had the meaning attributed to it, to render a verdict of guilty, whether they believed the publication false and malicious or not; in other words, to convict the party of guilt, notwithstanding they might believe the essential element of criminality to be wanting. The jury, dissatisfied with these instructions, and unwilling to make their verdict cover * matters upon which they were [* 461] not at liberty to exercise their judgment, returned a verdict of "guilty of printing and publishing *only*," but this the court afterwards rejected as ambiguous, and ordered a new trial.¹

In Miller's case, which was tried the same year, Lord *Mansfield* instructed the jury as follows: "The direction I am going to give you is with a full conviction and confidence that it is the language of the law. If you by your verdict find the defendant not guilty, the fact established by that verdict is, he did not publish a paper of that meaning; that fact is established, and there is an end of the prosecution. You are to try the fact, because your verdict establishes that fact, that he did not publish it. If you find that, according to your judgment, your verdict is final, and if you find it otherwise, it is between God and your consciences, for that is the basis upon which all verdicts ought to be founded; then the fact finally established by your verdict, if you find him guilty, is, that he printed and published a paper of the tenor and of the meaning set forth in the information; that is the only fact finally established by your verdict; and whatever fact is finally established never can be controverted in any shape whatever. But you do not by that verdict give an opinion, or establish whether it is or not lawful to print or publish a paper of the tenor and meaning in the information; for, supposing the defendant is found guilty, and the paper is such a paper as by the law of the land may be printed and published, the defendant has a right to have judgment respited, and to have it carried to the highest court of judicature."²

Whether these instructions were really in accordance with the law of England, it would be of little importance now to inquire.

¹ 20 State Trials, 895.

² 20 State Trials, 870. For an account of the raising of the same question in Pennsylvania, so early as 1692, see *The Forum*, by David Paul Brown, Vol. I. p. 280.

They were assailed as not only destructive to the liberty of the press, but as taking from the jury that right to cover by their verdict all the matter charged and constituting the alleged offence, as it was conceded was their right in all other cases. In no other case could the jury be required to find a criminal intent which they did not believe to exist. In the House of Lords they were assailed by Lord *Chatham*; and Lord *Camden*, the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, in direct contradiction to

Lord *Mansfield*, declared his instructions not to be the [*462] law of England. * Nevertheless, with the judges generally the view of Lord *Mansfield* prevailed, and it continued to be enforced for more than twenty years, so far as juries would suffer themselves to be controlled by the directions of the courts.

The act known as Mr. Fox's Libel Act was passed in 1792, against the protest of Lord Thurlow and five other lords, who predicted from it "the confusion and destruction of the law of England." It was entitled "An act to remove doubts respecting the functions of juries in cases of libel," and it declared and enacted that the jury might give a general verdict of guilty or not guilty, upon the whole matter put in issue upon the indictment or information, and should not be required or directed by the court or judge before whom it should be tried to find the defendant guilty, merely on the proof of the publication of the paper charged to be a libel, and of the sense ascribed to the same in the indictment or information: *Provided*, that on every such trial the court or judge before whom it should be tried should, according to their discretion, give their opinion and direction to the jury on the matter in issue, in like manner as in other criminal cases: *Provided also*, that nothing therein contained should prevent the jury from finding a special verdict in their discretion, as in other criminal cases: *Provided also*, that in case the jury should find the defendant guilty, he might move in arrest of judgment on such ground and in such manner as by law he might have done before the passing of the act.

Whether this statute made the jury the rightful judges of the law as well as of the facts in libel cases, or whether, on the other hand, it only placed these cases on the same footing as other criminal prosecutions, leaving it the duty of the jury to accept and follow the instructions of the judge upon the criminal char-

acter of the publication, are questions upon which there are still differences of opinion. Its friends have placed¹ the former construction upon it, while others adopt the opposite view.¹

In the United States the disposition of the early judges was to adopt the view of Lord *Mansfield* as a correct exposition of the respective functions of court and jury in cases of libel ; and on the memorable trial of Callendar, which led to the impeachment of Judge *Chase*, of the United States Supreme Court, the right of the *jury to judge of the law was the point [* 463] in dispute upon which that judge first delivered his opinion, and afterwards invited argument. The charge there was of libel upon President Adams, and was prosecuted under the Sedition Law, so called, which expressly provided that the jury should have the right to determine the law and the fact, under the direction of the court, as in other cases. The defence insisted that the Sedition Law was unconstitutional and void, and proposed to argue that question to the jury, but were stopped by the court. The question of the constitutionality of a statute, it was said by Judge *Chase*, was a judicial question, and could only be passed upon by the court ; the jury might determine the law applicable to the case under the statute, but they could not inquire into the validity of the statute by which that right was given.²

Whatever may be the true import of Mr. Fox's Libel Act, it would seem clear that a constitutional provision which allows the jury to determine the law, refers the questions of law to them for their rightful decision. Wherever such provisions exist, the jury, we think, are the judges of the law ; and the argument of counsel upon it is rightfully addressed to both the court and the jury. Nor can the distinction be maintained which was taken by Judge *Chase*, and which forbids the jury considering questions affecting the constitutional validity of statutes. When the question before them is, what is the law of the case, the highest and paramount law of the case cannot be shut from view. Nevertheless, we conceive it to be proper, and indeed the duty of the judge, to instruct the jury upon the law in these cases, and it is to be expected that they will generally adopt and follow his opinion.

¹ Compare Forsyth on Trial by Jury, c. 12, with May's Constitutional History of England, c. 9.

² Wharton's State Trials, 688.

Where, however, the constitution provides that they shall be judges of the law "as in other cases," or may determine the law and the fact "under the direction of the court," we must perhaps conclude that the intention has been simply to put libel cases on the same footing with any other criminal prosecutions,¹

¹ "By the last clause of the sixth section of the eighth article of the Constitution of this State, it is declared that, in all indictments for libel, the jury shall have the right to determine the law and the facts under the direction of the court as in other cases. It would seem from this that the framers of our Bill of Rights did not imagine that juries were rightfully judges of the law and fact in criminal cases, independently of the directions of courts. Their right to judge of the law is a right to be exercised only under the direction of the courts; and if they go aside from that direction and determine the law incorrectly, they depart from their duty, and commit a public wrong; and this in criminal as well as in civil cases." *Montgomery v. State*, 11 Ohio, 427. See also *State v. Allen*, 1 McCord, 525; *State v. Jay*, 34 N. J. 368, 370.

The Constitution of Pennsylvania declares that "in all indictments for libels the jury shall have a right to determine the law and the facts, under the direction of the court, as in other cases." In *Pittock v. O'Neill*, 63 Penn. St. 256; s. c. 3 Am. Rep. 544, *Sharswood, J.*, says: "There can be no doubt that both in criminal and civil cases the court may express to the jury their opinion as to whether the publication is libellous. The difference is that in criminal cases they are not bound to do so, and if they do, their opinion is not binding on the jury, who may give a general verdict in opposition to it; and if that verdict is for the defendant, a new trial cannot be granted against his consent. As our declaration of rights succinctly expresses it, the jury have

the right to determine the law and the facts in indictments for libel as in other cases. But in civil cases the judge is bound to instruct the jury as to whether the publication is libellous, supposing the innuendoes to be true; and if that instruction is disregarded, the verdict will be set aside as contrary to law. In England, the courts have recently disregarded, to some extent, this plain distinction between criminal and civil proceedings. It appears to be upon the ground that Mr. Fox's act, though limited in terms to indictments and informations was declaratory of the law in all cases of libel; upon what principle of construction, however, it is not very easy to understand. It is there the approved practice for the judge in civil actions, after explaining to the jury the legal definition of a libel, to leave to them the question whether the publication upon which the action is founded falls within that definition. *Folkard's Stark.* 202; *Baylis v. Lawrence*, 11 A. & E. 920; *Parmiter v. Coupland*, 6 M. & W. 105; *Campbell v. Spottiswoode*, 3 B. & S. 781; *Cox v. Lee*, L. R. 4 Exch. 281. These cases were followed in *Shattuck v. Allen*, 4 Gray, 540. Yet it is clearly held that a verdict for the defendant upon that issue will be set aside, and a new trial granted. *Hakewell v. Ingram*, 28 Eng. Law & Eq. 413. 'Though in criminal proceedings for libel,' says *Jarvis, Ch. J.*, 'there may be no review, in civil matters there are cases in which verdicts for the defendant are set aside upon the ground that the matter was a libel, though the jury have found it was not.' This

and that the jury will be expected to receive the law from the court.

* "*Good Motives and Justifiable Ends.*" [* 464]

In civil suits to recover damages for slander or libel, the truth is generally a complete defence, if pleaded and established.¹ In criminal prosecutions it was formerly not so. The basis of the prosecution being that the libel was likely to disturb the peace and order of society, that liability was supposed to be all the greater if the injurious charges were true, as a man would be more likely to commit a breach of the peace when the matters alleged against him were true than if they were false, in which latter case he might, perhaps, afford to treat them with contempt. Hence arose the common maxim, "The greater the truth, the greater the libel," which subjected the law on this subject to a great deal of ridicule and contempt. The constitutional provisions we have quoted generally make the truth a defence if published with good motives and for justifiable ends. Precisely what showing shall establish good motives and justifiable occasion must be settled by future decisions. In one case the suggestion was thrown out that proof of the truth of the charge alone might be sufficient,² but this was not an authoritative decision,

must be conceded to be an anomaly; and it will be best to avoid a practice which leads to such a result. The law, indeed, may be considered as settled in this State by long practice, never questioned, but incidentally confirmed in *McConkle v. Binns*, 5 Binn. 340, and *Hays v. Brierly*, 4 Watts, 392. It was held in the case last cited that where words of a dubious import are used, the plaintiff has a right to aver their meaning by *innuendo*, and the truth of such *innuendo* is for the jury. In New York, since the recent English cases, the question has been ably discussed and fully considered in *Snyder v. Andrews*, 6 Barb. 43; *Green v. Telfair*, 20 Barb. 11; *Hunt v. Bennett*, 19 N. Y. 173; and the law established on its old foundations."

¹ *Foss v. Hildreth*, 10 Allen, 76. See *ante*, p. *455.

² Charge of Judge *Betts* to the jury in *King v. Root*, 4 Wend. 121: "Should the scope of proofs and circumstances lead you to suppose the defendants had no good end in contemplation, that they were instigated to these charges solely to avenge personal and political resentments against the plaintiff, still, if they have satisfactorily shown the charges to be true, they must be acquitted of all liability to damage in a private action on account of the publication. Indeed, if good motives and justifiable ends must be shown, they might well be implied from the establishment of the truth of a charge, for the like reason that malice is inferred from its falsity." Malice, it is

and it could not be true in any case where the matter published was not fit to be spread before the public, whether true or false. It must be held, we think, that where the defendant justifies in a criminal prosecution, the burden is upon him to prove, not only the truth of the charge, but also the "good motives and justifiable ends" of the publication. These might appear from the very character of the publication itself, if it was true; as where it exhibited the misconduct or unfitness of a candidate [* 465] for public office; but where it related to a * person in private life, and who was himself taking no such action as should put his character in issue before the public, some further showing would generally be requisite after the truth had been proved.¹

said by *Abbott*, Ch. J., is alleged in the declaration "rather to exclude the supposition that the publication may have made on some innocent occasion than for any other purpose." *Duncan v. Thwaites*, 3 B. & C. 556, 585. See *Moore v. Stephenson*, 27 Conn. 14.

¹ In *Commonwealth v. Bonner*, 9 Met. 410, the defendant was indicted for a libel on one Oliver Brown, in the following words: "However, there were few who, according to the old toper's dictionary, were drunk; yea, in all consciences, drunk as a drunken man; and who and which of you desperadoes of the town got them so? Was it you whose groggery was open, and the rat soup measured out at your bar to drunkards, while a daughter lay a corpse in your house, and even on the day she was laid in her cold and silent grave, a victim of God's chastening rod upon your guilty drunkard-manufacturing head? Was it you who refused to close your drunkery on the day that your aged father was laid in the narrow house appointed for all the living, and which must ere long receive your recreant carcass? We ask again, Was it you? Was it you?" On the trial the defendant introduced evidence to prove, and

contended that he did prove, all the facts alleged in his publication. The court charged the jury that the burden was upon the defendant to show that the matter charged to be libellous was published with good motives and for justifiable ends; that malice is the wilful doing of an unlawful act, and does not necessarily imply personal ill-will towards the person libelled. The defendant excepted to the ruling of the court as applied to the facts proved, contending that, having proved the truth of all the facts alleged in the libel, and the publication being in reference to an illegal traffic, a public nuisance, the jury should have been instructed that it was incumbent on the government to show that defendant's motives were malicious, in the popular sense of the word, as respects said Brown. By the court, *Shaw*, Ch. J.: "The court are of opinion that the charge of the judge of the Common Pleas was strictly correct. If the publication be libellous, that is, be such as to bring the person libelled into hatred, contempt, and ridicule amongst the people, malice is presumed from the injurious act. But by Rev. Stat. c. 133, § 6, 'in every prosecution for writing or publishing a libel, the defendant may give in evidence, in his

defence upon the trial, the truth of the matter contained in the publication charged as libellous: provided, that such evidence shall not be deemed a sufficient justification, unless it shall be further made to appear, on the trial, that the matter charged to be libellous was published with good motives and for justifiable ends.' Nothing can be more explicit. The judge, therefore, was right in directing the jury that, after the publication had been shown to have been made by the defendant, and to be libellous and malicious, the burden was on the defendant, not only to prove the truth of the matter charged as libellous, but likewise that it was published with good motives and for justifiable ends. We are also satisfied that the judge was right in his description or definition of legal malice, that it is not malice in its popular sense; viz., that of hatred and ill-will to the party libelled, but an act done wilfully, unlawfully, and in violation of the just rights of another." And yet it would seem as if, conceding the facts published to be true, the jury ought to have found

the occasion a proper one for correcting such indecent conduct by public exposure. See further on this subject, *Regina v. Newman*, 1 El. & Bl. 268 and 558; s. c. 18 Eng. L. & Eq. 113; *Barthelemy v. People*, 2 Hill, 248; *State v. White*, 7 Ired. 180; *State v. Burnham*, 9 N. H. 34; *Cole v. Wilson*, 18 B. Monr. 217; *Hagan v. Hendry*, 18 Md. 191; *Bradley v. Heath*, 12 Pick. 163; *Snyder v. Fulton*, 34 Md. 128; *Commonwealth v. Snelling*, 15 Pick. 337. The fact that the publication is copied from another source is clearly no protection, if it is not true in fact. *Regina v. Newman*, *ubi sup.* Compare *Saunders v. Mills*, 6 Bing. 213; *Creevy v. Carr*, 7 C. & P. 64. Neither are the motives or good character of the defendant, if he has published libellous matter which is false. *Barthelemy v. People*, 2 Hill, 248; *Commonwealth v. Snelling*, 15 Pick. 337; *Wilson v. Noonan*, 27 Wis. 610. Where the truth is relied upon as a defence, the charge should appear to be true as made. *Whittemore v. Weiss*, 33 Mich. 348; *Palmer v. Smith*, 21 Mich. 419.

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* CHAPTER XIII.

OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

A CAREFUL examination of the American constitutions will disclose the fact that nothing is more fully set forth or more plainly expressed than the determination of their authors to preserve and perpetuate religious liberty, and to guard against the slightest approach towards the establishment of an inequality in the civil and political rights of citizens, which shall have for its basis only their differences of religious belief. The American people came to the work of framing their fundamental laws after centuries of religious oppression and persecution, sometimes by one party or sect and sometimes by another, had taught them the utter futility of all attempts to propagate religious opinions by the rewards, penalties, or terrors of human laws. They could not fail to perceive, also, that a union of Church and State, like that which existed in England, if not wholly impracticable in America, was certainly opposed to the spirit of our institutions, and that any domineering of one sect over another was repressing to the energies of the people, and must necessarily tend to discontent and disorder. Whatever, therefore, may have been their individual sentiments upon religious questions, or upon the propriety of the State assuming supervision and control of religious affairs under other circumstances, the general voice has been, that persons of every religious persuasion should be made equal before the law, and that questions of religious belief and religious worship should be questions between each individual man and his Maker. Of these questions human tribunals, so long as the public order is not disturbed, are not to take cognizance, except as the individual, by his voluntary action in associating himself with a religious organization, may have conferred upon such organization a jurisdiction over him in ecclesiastical matters.¹ These constitutions, therefore,

¹ The religious societies which exist in America are mere voluntary societies, having little resemblance to those which constitute a part of the

have not established religious toleration merely, but religious equality ; in that particular being far in advance not only of the

machinery of government in England. They are for the most part formed under general laws, which permit the voluntary incorporation of attendants upon religious worship, with power in the corporation to hold real and personal estate for the purposes of their organization, but not for other purposes. Such a society is "a voluntary association of individuals or families, united for the purpose of having a common place of worship, and to provide a proper teacher to instruct them in religious doctrines and duties, and to administer the ordinances of baptism, &c. Although a church or body of professing Christians is almost uniformly connected with such a society or congregation, the members of the church have no other or greater rights than any other members of the society who statedly attend with them for the purposes of divine worship. Over the church, as such, the legal or temporal tribunals of the State do not profess to have any jurisdiction whatever, except so far as is necessary to protect the civil rights of others, and to preserve the public peace. All questions relating to the faith and practice of the church and its members belong to the church judicatories, to which they have voluntarily subjected themselves. But, as a general principle, those ecclesiastical judicatories cannot interfere with the temporal concerns of the congregation or society with which the church or the members thereof are connected." *Walworth*, Chancellor, in *Baptist Church v. Wetherell*, 3 Paige, 301. See *Ferraria v. Vasconcellos*, 31 Ill. 25; *Lawyer v. Clipperly*, 7 Paige, 281; *Shannon v. Frost*, 3 B. Monr. 258; *German, &c., Cong. v. Pressler*, 17 La. Ann. 127; *Sohier v. Trinity Church*, 109 Mass. 1. Such a corporation is not an ecclesiastical,

but merely a private civil corporation, the members of the society being the corporators, and the trustees the managing officers, with such powers as the statute confers, and the ordinary discretionary powers of officers in civil corporations. *Robertson v. Bullions*, 11 N. Y. 249; *Miller v. Gable*, 2 Denio, 492. Compare *Watson v. Jones*, 13 Wall. 679. The church connected with the society, if any there be, is not recognized in the law as a distinct entity; the corporators in the society are not necessarily members thereof, and the society may change its government, faith, form of worship, discipline, and ecclesiastical relations at will, subject only to the restraints imposed by their articles of association, and to the general laws of the State. *Keyser v. Stansifer*, 6 Ohio, 363; *Robertson v. Bullions*, 11 N. Y. 249; *Parish of Bellport v. Tooker*, 29 Barb. 256; same case, 21 N. Y. 267; *Burrell v. Associated Reform Church*, 44 Barb. 282. The courts of the State have no general jurisdiction and control over the officers of such corporations in respect to the performance of their official duties ; but as in respect to the property which they hold for the corporation they stand in position of trustees, the courts may exercise the same supervision as in other cases of trust. *Ferraria v. Vasconcellos*, 31 Ill. 25; *Smith v. Nelson*, 18 Vt. 511; *Watson v. Avery*, 2 Bush, 322; *Watson v. Jones*, 13 Wall. 679; *Hale v. Everett*, 53 N. H. 9. But the courts will interfere where abuse of trust is alleged only in clear cases, especially if the abuse alleged be a departure from the tenets of the founders of a charity. *Happy v. Morton*, 33 Ill. 398. See *Hale v. Everett*, 53 N. H. 9. The articles of association will determine who may vote when the State law

stitutions, would not generally be understood to include it. It has been decided that the clause in the Constitution of Illinois, that "the mode of levying a tax shall be by valuation, so that every person shall pay a tax in proportion to the value of the property he or she has in his or her possession," did not prevent the levy of poll-taxes in highway labor. "The framers of the constitution intended to direct a uniform mode of taxation on property, and not to prohibit any other species of taxation, but to leave the legislature the power to impose such other taxes as would be consonant to public justice, and as the circumstances of the country might require. They probably intended to prevent the imposition of an arbitrary tax on property, according to kind and quantity, and without reference to value. The inequality of the mode of taxation was the object to be avoided. We cannot believe that they intended that all the public burdens should be borne by those having property in possession, wholly exempting the rest of the community, who, by the same constitution, were made secure in the exercise of the rights of suffrage, and all the immunities of the citizen."¹ And in another case, where an assessment of highway labor is compared with one upon adjacent property for widening a street, — which had been held not to be taxation, as that term was understood in the constitution, — it is said: "An assessment of labor for the repair of roads and streets is less like a tax than is such an assessment. The former is not based upon, nor has it any reference to, property or values owned by the person of whom it is required, whilst the latter is based alone upon the property designated by the law imposing it. Nor is an assessment a capitation tax, as that is a sum of money levied upon each poll. This rate, on the contrary, is a requisition for so many days' labor, which may be commuted in money. No doubt, the number of days levied, and the sum which may be received by commutation, must be uniform within the limits of the district or body imposing the same. This requisition for labor to repair roads is not a tax, and hence this exemption is not repugnant to the constitution."²

It will be apparent from what has already been said, that it is

¹ *Sawyer v. City of Alton*, 4 Ill. Draining Co. Case, 11 La. Ann. 338, 130; *State v. Halifax*, 4 Dev. 345; 372.
Amenia v. Stamford, 6 Johns. 92;

² *Town of Pleasant v. Kost*, 29 Ill. 494.

not essential to the validity of taxation, that it be levied according to rules of abstract justice.¹ It is only essential that the legislature keep within its proper sphere of action, and not impose burdens under the name of taxation which are not taxes in fact; and its decision as to what is proper, just, and politic, must then be final and conclusive. Absolute equality and strict justice are unattainable in tax proceedings. The legislature must be left to decide for itself how nearly it is possible to approximate so desirable a result. It must happen under any tax law that some property will be taxed twice, while other property will escape taxation altogether. Instances will also occur where persons will be taxed as owners of property which has ceased to exist. The system in vogue for taking valuations of property fixes upon a certain time for that purpose, and a party becomes liable to be taxed upon what he possesses at the time the valuing officer calls upon him. Yet changes of property from person to person are occurring while the valuation is going on, and the same parcel of property is found by the assessor in the hands of two different persons, and is twice assessed, while another parcel for similar reasons is not assessed at all. Then the man who owns property when the assessment is * taken may [* 514] have been deprived of it by accident or other misfortune before the tax becomes payable; but the tax is nevertheless a charge against him. And when the valuation is only made once in a series of years, the occasional hardships and inequalities in consequence of relative changes in the value of property from various causes, become sometimes very glaring. Nevertheless, no question of constitutional law is involved in these cases, and the legislative control is complete.²

¹ *Frellsen v. Mahan*, 21 La. Ann. 79; *People v. Whyler*, 41 Cal. 351; *Warren v. Henley*, 31 Iowa, 43. In this last case, *Beck, J.*, criticises the position taken *ante*, pp. *507, *508, that the cost of a local improvement cannot be imposed on the adjoining premises irrespective of any apportionment, and appears to suppose our views rest upon the injustice of such a proceeding. This is not strictly correct; it may or may not be just in any particular case; but taxation

necessarily implies apportionment, and even a just burden cannot be imposed as a tax without it.

² In *Shaw v. Dennis*, 5 Gilm. 405, objection was taken to an assessment made for a local improvement under a special statute, that the commissioners, in determining who should be liable to pay the tax, and the amount each should pay, were to be governed by the last assessment of taxable property in the county. It was insisted that this was an unjust

The legislature must also, except when an unbending rule has been prescribed for it by the constitution, have power to select in its discretion the subjects of taxation. The rule of uniformity requires an apportionment among all the subjects of taxation within the districts; but it does not require that every thing which the legislature might make taxable shall be made so in fact. Many exemptions are usually made from taxation from reasons the cogency of which is at once apparent. The agencies of the national government, we have seen, are not taxable by the States; and the agencies and property of States, counties, cities, boroughs, towns, and villages, are also exempted by law, because, if any portion of the public expenses was imposed upon them, it must in some form be collected from the citizens before it can be paid. No beneficial object could therefore be accomplished by any such assessment. The property of educational and religious institutions is also generally exempted from taxation by law upon very similar considerations, and from a prevailing belief that it is the policy and the interest of the State to encourage [* 515] them.¹ If the State * may cause taxes to be levied from

criterion, for a man might have disposed of all the taxable property assessed to him in the last assessment before this tax was actually declared by the commissioners. The court, however, regarded the objection as more refined than practical, and one that, if allowed, would at once annihilate the power of taxation. "In the imposition of taxes, exact and critical justice and equality are absolutely unattainable. If we attempt it, we might have to divide a single year's tax upon a given article of property among a dozen different individuals who owned it at different times during the year, and then be almost as far from the desired end as when we started. The proposition is Utopian. The legislature must adopt some practicable system; and there is no more danger of oppression or injustice in taking a former valuation than in relying upon one to be made subsequently." And see *People v. Worthington*, 21 Ill. 171.

¹ As in the case of other special privileges, exemptions from taxation are to be strictly construed. *Trustees of M. E. Church v. Ellis*, 88 Ind. 8; *State v. Mills*, 34 N. J. 177; and many other cases cited in *Cooley on Taxation*, 146. The local authorities cannot be authorized by the legislature to make exemptions. *Farnsworth Co. v. Lisbon*, 62 Me. 451; *Wilson v. Supervisors of Sutter*, 47 Cal. 91. See *Brewer Brick Co. v. Brewer*, 62 Me. 62; s. c. 16 Am. Rep. 395; *State v. Hudson*, 37 N. J. 12. It has been generally held that an exemption from taxation would not exempt the property from being assessed for a local improvement. *Matter of Mayor, &c.*, 11 Johns. 77; *Baltimore v. Cemetery Co.*, 7 Md. 517; *La Fayette v. Orphan Asylum*, 4 La. Ann. 1; *Pray v. Northern Liberties*, 31 Penn. St. 69; *Le Fever v. Detroit*, 2 Mich. 586; *Lockwood v. St. Louis*, 24 Mo. 20; *Broadway Baptist Church v. McAtee*, 8 Bush, 508; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 480;

motives of charity or gratitude, so for the like reasons it may exempt the objects of charity and gratitude from taxation. Property is sometimes released from taxation by contract between the State and corporations, and specified occupations are sometimes charged with specific taxes in lieu of all taxation of their property. A broad field is here opened to legislative discretion. As matter of State policy it might also be deemed proper to make general exemption of sufficient of the tools of trade or other means of support, to enable the poor man, not yet a pauper, to escape becoming a public burden. There is still ample room for apportionment after all such exemptions have been made. The constitutional requirement of equality and uniformity only extends to such objects of taxation as the legislature shall determine to be properly subject to the burden.¹ The power to determine the persons and the objects to be taxed is trusted exclusively to the legislative department;² but over all those objects the burden must be spread, or it will be unequal and unlawful as to such as are selected to make the payment.³

Universalist Society v. Providence, 6 R. I. 235; *Patterson v. Society, &c.*, 24 N. J. 385; *Cincinnati College v. State*, 19 Ohio, 110; *Brewster v. Hough*, 10 N. H. 138; *Seymour v. Hartford*, 21 Conn. 481; *Palmer v. Stumph*, 29 Ind. 329; *Peoria v. Kidder*, 26 Ill. 351; *Hale v. Kenosha*, 29 Wis. 599; *Seamen's Friend Society v. Boston*, 116 Mass. 181; *Orange, &c. R. R. Co. v. Alexandria*, 17 Grat. 176.

¹ *State v. North*, 27 Mo. 464; *People v. Colman*, 3 Cal. 46; *Durach's Appeal*, 62 Penn. St. 494; *Brewer Brick Co. v. Brewer*, 62 Me. 62.

² *Wilson v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 4 E. D. Smith, 675; *Hill v. Higdon*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 245; *State v. Parker*, 33 N. J. 313; *State v. County Court*, 19 Ark. 360. Classes of property as well as classes of persons may be exempted. *Butler's Appeal*, 73 Penn. St. 448. Notwithstanding a requirement that "the rule of taxation shall be uniform," the legislature may levy specific State taxes on

corporations, and exempt them from municipal taxation. So held on the ground of *stare decisis*. *Kneeland v. Milwaukee*, 15 Wis. 454.

³ In the case of *Weeks v. Milwaukee*, 10 Wis. 242, a somewhat peculiar exemption was made. It appears that several lots in the city upon which a new hotel was being constructed, of the value of from \$150,000 to \$200,000, were purposely omitted to be taxed, under the direction of the Common Council, "in view of the great public benefit which the construction of the hotel would be to the city." *Paine, J.*, in delivering the opinion of the court, says: "I have no doubt this exemption originated in motives of generosity and public spirit. And perhaps the same motives should induce the tax-payers of the city to submit to the slight increase of the tax thereby imposed on each, without questioning its strict legality. But they cannot be compelled to. No man is obliged to be more generous than the law requires,

In some of the States it has been decided that the particular [* 516] provisions inserted in their constitutions to insure uniformity are so worded as to forbid exemptions. Thus the late Constitution of Illinois provided that "the General As-

but each may stand strictly upon his legal rights. That this exemption was illegal, was scarcely contested. I shall, therefore, make no effort to show that the Common Council had no authority to suspend or repeal the general law of the State, declaring what property shall be taxable and what exempt. But the important question presented is, whether, conceding it to have been entirely unauthorized, it vitiates the tax assessed upon other property. And upon this question I think the following rule is established, both by reason and authority. Omissions of this character, arising from mistakes of fact, erroneous computations, or errors of judgment on the part of those to whom the execution of the taxing laws is intrusted, do not necessarily vitiate the whole tax. But intentional disregard of those laws, in such manner as to impose illegal taxes on those who are assessed, does. The first part of the rule is necessary to enable taxes to be collected at all. The execution of these laws is necessarily intrusted to men, and men are fallible, liable to frequent mistakes of fact and errors of judgment. If such errors, on the part of those who are attempting in good faith to perform their duties, should vitiate the whole tax, no tax could ever be collected. And, therefore, though they sometimes increase improperly the burdens of those paying taxes, that part of the rule which holds the tax not thereby avoided is absolutely essential to a continuance of government. But it seems to me clear that the other part is equally essential to the just protection of the citizen. If those executing these laws may deliberately

disregard them, and assess the whole tax upon a part only of those who are liable to pay it, and have it still a legal tax, then the laws afford no protection, and the citizen is at the mercy of those officers, who, by being appointed to execute the laws, would seem to be thereby placed beyond legal control. I know of no considerations of public policy or necessity that can justify carrying the rule to that extent. And the fact that in this instance the disregard of the law proceeded from good motives ought not to affect the decision of the question. It is a rule of law that is to be established; and, if established here because the motives were good, it would serve as a precedent where the motives were bad, and the power usurped for purposes of oppression." pp. *263-265. See also *Henry v. Chester*, 15 Vt. 460; *State v. Collector of Jersey City*, 24 N. J. 108; *Insurance Co. v. Yard*, 17 Penn. St. 331; *Williams v. School District*, 21 Pick. 75; *Hersey v. Supervisors of Milwaukee*, 16 Wis. 185; *Crosby v. Lyon*, 37 Cal. 242; *Primm v. Belleville*, 59 Ill. 142; *Adams v. Beman*, 10 Kan. 37. But it seems that an omission of property from the tax-roll by the assessor, unintentionally, through want of judgment and lack of diligence and business habits, will not invalidate the roll. *Dean v. Gleason*, 16 Wis. 1. In *Scofield v. Watkins*, 22 Ill. 66, and *Merritt v. Farriss*, 22 Ill. 303, it appears to be decided that even in the case of intentional omissions the tax-roll would not be invalidated, but the parties injured would be left to their remedy against the assessor. See also *Dunham v. Chicago*, 55 Ill. 361.

sembly shall provide for levying a tax by valuation, so that every person and corporation shall pay a tax in proportion to the value of his or her property.”¹ Under this it has been held that exemption by the legislature of persons residing in a city from a tax levied to repair roads beyond the city limits, by township authority, — the city being embraced within the township which, for that purpose, was the taxing district, — was void.² It is to be observed of these cases, however, that they would have fallen within the general principle laid down in *Knowlton v. Supervisors of Rock Co.*,³ and the legislative acts *un- [* 517] der consideration might, if that case were followed, have been declared void on general principles, irrespective of the peculiar wording of the constitution. These cases, notwithstanding, as well as others in Illinois, recognize the power in the legislature to *commute* for a tax, or to contract for its release for a consideration. The Constitution of Ohio provides⁴ that “laws shall be passed taxing by a uniform rule all moneys, credits, investments in bonds, stocks, joint-stock companies, or otherwise; and also all real and personal property, according to its true value in money.” Under this section it was held not competent for the legislature to provide that lands within the limits of a city should not be taxed for any city purpose, except roads, unless the same were laid off into town lots and recorded as such, or into outlots not exceeding five acres each.⁵ Upon this case we should make the same remark as upon the Illinois cases above referred to.

It is, moreover, essential to valid taxation that the taxing officers be able to show legislative authority for the burden they assume to impose in every instance. Taxes can only be voted by the people’s representatives. They are in every instance an appropriation by the people to the government, which the latter is to expend in furnishing the people protection, security, and such facilities for enjoyment as it properly pertains to government to provide. This principle is a chief corner-stone of Anglo-Saxon liberty; and it has operated not only as an important check on

¹ Art. 9, § 2, of the old Constitution.

² *O’Kane v. Treat*, 25 Ill. 561; *Hunsaker v. Wright*, 30 Ill. 146. See also *Trustees v. McConnell*, 12 Ill. 138; *Madison County v. People*, 58 Ill. 456; *Dunham v. Chicago*, 55 Ill.

357. See also *Louisville, &c. R. R. Co. v. State*, 8 Heisk. 664, 744.

³ 9 Wis. 410. See *ante*, p. *502.

⁴ Art. 12, § 2.

⁵ *Zanesville v. Auditor of Muskingum County*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 589.

government, in preventing extravagant expenditures, as well as unjust and tyrannical action, but it has been an important guaranty of the right of private property. Property is secure from the lawless grasp of the government, if the means of existence of the government depend upon the voluntary grants of those who own the property. Our ancestors coupled their grants with demands for the redress of grievances; but in modern times the surest protection against grievances has been found to be to vote specific taxes for the specific purposes to which the people's representatives are willing they shall be devoted;¹ and the persons exercising the functions of government must then become petitioners if they desire money for other objects. And then these grants are only made periodically. Only a few things, such as the salaries of officers, the interest upon the public debt, [* 518] the support * of schools, and the like, are provided for by permanent laws; and not always is this done. The government is dependent from year to year on the periodical vote of supplies. And this vote will come from representatives who are newly chosen by the people, and who will be expected to reflect their views regarding the public expenditures. State taxation, therefore, is not likely to be excessive or onerous, except when the people, in times of financial ease, excitement, and inflation, have allowed the incurring of extravagant debts, the burden of which remains after the excitement has passed away.

But it is as true of the political divisions of the State as it is of the State at large, that legislative authority must be shown for every levy of taxes.² The power to levy taxes by these divisions comes from the State. The State confers it, and at the same time exercises a parental supervision by circumscribing it. Indeed, on general principles, the power is circumscribed by the rule that the taxation by the local authorities can only be for local purposes.³ Neither the State nor the local body can authorize the imposition of a tax on the people of a county or town for an object in which the people of the county or town are not concerned. And by some of the State constitutions it is expressly required that the State, in creating municipal corpora-

¹ *Hoboken v. Phinney*, 29 N. J. 59; *Mays v. Cincinnati*, 1 Ohio, n. s. 65.

² *Clark v. Davenport*, 14 Iowa, ³ *Foster v. Kenosha*, 12 Wis. 618. 494; *Burlington v. Kellar*, 18 Iowa, See *ante*, p. *218.

tions, shall restrict their power of taxation over the subjects within their control. These requirements, however, impose an obligation upon the legislature which only its sense of duty can compel it to perform.¹ It is evident that if the legislature fail to enact the restrictive legislation, the courts have no power to compel such action. Whether in any case a charter of incorporation could be held void on the ground that it conferred unlimited powers of taxation, is a question that could not well arise, as a charter is probably never granted which does not impose some restrictions; and where that is the case, it must be inferred that those were all the restrictions the legislature deemed important, and that therefore the constitutional duty of the legislature has been performed.²

¹ In *Hill v. Higdon*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 248, *Ranney, J.*, says of this provision: "A failure to perform this duty may be of very serious import, but lays no foundation for judicial correction." And see *Maloy v. Marietta*, 11 Ohio, n. s. 638.

² The Constitution of Ohio requires the legislature to provide by general laws for the organization of cities and incorporated villages, and to restrict their power of taxation, assessment, &c. The general law authorizing the expense of grading and paving streets to be assessed on the grounds bounding and abutting on the street, in proportion to the street front, was regarded as being passed in attempted fulfilment of the constitutional duty, and therefore valid. The chief restriction in the case was, that it did not authorize assessment in any other or different mode from what had been customary. *Northern Indiana R. R. Co. v. Connelly*, 10 Ohio, n. s. 165. The statute also provided that no improvement or repair of a street or highway, the cost of which was to be assessed upon the owners, should be directed without the concurrence of two-thirds of the members elected to the municipal council, or unless two-thirds of the owners to be charged should petition

in writing therefor. In *Maloy v. Marietta*, 11 Ohio, n. s. 639, *Peck, J.*, says: "This may be said to be a very imperfect protection; and in some cases will doubtless prove to be so; but it is calculated and designed, by the unanimity or the publicity it requires, to prevent any flagrant abuses of the power. Such is plainly its object; and we know of no rights conferred upon courts to interfere with the exercise of a legislative discretion which the constitution has delegated to the law-making power." And see *Weeks v. Milwaukee*, 10 Wis. 242. The Constitution of Michigan requires the legislature, in providing for the incorporation of cities and villages, to "restrict their power of taxation," &c. The Detroit Metropolitan Police Law made it the duty of the Board of Police to prepare and submit to the city controller, on or before the first day of May in each year, an estimate in detail of the cost and expense of maintaining the police department, and the Common Council was required to raise the same by general tax. These provisions, it was claimed, were in conflict with the constitution, because no limit was fixed by them to the estimates that might be made. In *People v. Mahaney*, 13 Mich. 498, the court say:

[* 519] * When, however, it is said to be essential to valid taxation that there be legislative authority for every tax that is laid, it is not meant that the legislative department of the State must have passed upon the necessity and propriety [* 520] of every particular tax; * but those who assume to seize the property of the citizen for the satisfaction of the tax must be able to show that that particular tax is authorized, either by general or special law. The power inherent in the government to tax lies dormant until a constitutional law has been passed calling it into action, and is then vitalized only to the extent provided by the law. Those, therefore, who act under such law should be careful to keep within its limits, lest they remove from their acts the shield of its protection. While we do not propose to enter upon any attempt to point out the various cases in which a failure to obey strictly the requirements of the law will render the proceedings void, and in regard to which a diversity of decision would be met with, we think we shall be safe in saying that, in cases of this description, which propose to dispossess the citizen of his property against his will, not only will any excess of taxation beyond what the law allows render the proceedings void, but any failure to comply with such requirements of the laws as are made for the protection of the owner's interest will also render them void.

There are several cases in which taxes have been levied but slightly in excess of legislative power, in which it has been urged in defence of the proceedings, that the law ought not to take

" Whether this provision of the constitution can be regarded as mandatory in a sense that would make all charters of municipal corporations and acts relating thereto which are wanting in this limitation invalid, we do not feel called upon to decide in this case, since it is clear that a limitation upon taxation is fixed by the act before us. The constitution has not prescribed the character of the restriction which shall be imposed, and from the nature of the case it was impossible to do more than to make it the duty of the legislature to set some bounds to a power so liable to abuse. A provision which, like the

one complained of, limits the power of taxation to the actual expenses as estimated by the governing board, after first limiting the power of the board to incur expense within narrow limits, is as much a *restriction* as if it confined the power to a certain percentage upon taxable property, or to a sum proportioned to the number of inhabitants in the city. Whether the restriction fixed upon would as effectually guard the citizen against abuse as any other which might have been established was a question for the legislative department of the government, and does not concern us on this inquiry."

notice of such unimportant matters ; but an excess of jurisdiction is never unimportant. In one case in Maine, the excess was eighty-seven cents only in a tax of \$225.75, but it was held sufficient to render the proceedings void. We quote from *Mellen*, Ch. J., delivering the opinion of the court : " It is contended that the sum of eighty-seven cents is such a trifle as to fall within the range of the maxim *de minimis*, &c. ; but if not, that still this small excess does not vitiate the assessment. The maxim is so vague in itself as to form a very unsafe ground of proceeding or judging ; and it may be almost as difficult to apply it as a rule in pecuniary concerns as to the interest which a witness has in the event of a cause ; and in such case it cannot apply. Any interest excludes him. The assessment was therefore unauthorized and void. If the line which the legislature has established be once passed, we know of no boundary to the discretion of the assessors." ¹ The same view has been taken by the Supreme Court of Michigan, by which the * opinion is [* 521] expressed that the maxim *de minimis lex non curat* should be applied with great caution to proceedings of this character, and that the excess could not be held unimportant and overlooked where, as in that case, each dollar of legal tax was perceptibly increased thereby.² Perhaps, however, a slight excess, not the result of intention, but of erroneous calculations, may be overlooked, in view of the great difficulty in making all such calculations mathematically correct, and the consequent impolicy of requiring entire freedom from all errors.³

Wherever a tax is invalid because of excess of authority, or

¹ *Huse v. Merriam*, 2 Me. 375. See *Joyner v. School District*, 3 Cush. 567 ; *Kemper v. McClelland*, 19 Ohio, 324 ; *School District v. Merrills*, 12 Conn. 437 ; *Elwell v. Shaw*, 1 Me. 335 ; *Wells v. Burbank*, 17 N. H. 393 ; *Kinsworthy v. Mitchell*, 21 Ark. 145.

² *Case v. Dean*, 16 Mich. 12. And see *Commonwealth v. Savings Bank*, 5 Allen, 428 ; *Bucknall v. Story*, 36 Cal. 67 ; *Drew v. Davis*, 10 Vt. 506 ; *Wells v. Burbank*, 17 N. H. 393.

³ This was the view taken by the Supreme Court of Wisconsin in *Kelley v. Corson*, 8 Wis. 182, where an

excess of \$8.61 in a tax of \$6,654.57 was held not to be fatal ; it appearing not to be the result of intention, and the court thinking that an accidental error no greater than this ought to be disregarded. See also *O'Grady v. Barnhisel*, 23 Cal. 287 ; *State v. Newark*, 25 N. J. 399. In Iowa the statute requires a sale to be upheld if any portion of the tax was legal. See *Parker v. Sexton*, 29 Iowa, 421. If a part of a tax only is illegal, the balance will be sustained if capable of being distinguished. *O'Kane v. Treat*, 25 Ill. 557 ; *People v. Nichols*, 49 Ill. 517.

because the requisites in tax proceedings which the law has provided for the protection of the tax-payer are not complied with, any sale of property based upon it will be void also. The owner is not deprived of his property by "the law of the land," if it is taken to satisfy an illegal tax. And if property is sold for the satisfaction of several taxes, any one of which is unauthorized, or for any reason illegal, the sale is altogether void.¹ And the

¹ This has been repeatedly held. *Elwell v. Shaw*, 1 Greenl. 335; *Lacy v. Davis*, 4 Mich. 140; *Bangs v. Snow*, 1 Mass. 188; *Thurston v. Little*, 3 Mass. 429; *Dillingham v. Snow*, 5 Mass. 547; *Stetson v. Kempton*, 13 Mass. 283; *Libby v. Burnham*, 15 Mass. 144; *Hayden v. Foster*, 13 Pick. 492; *Torrey v. Millbury*, 21 Pick. 70; *Alvord v. Collin*, 20 Pick. 418; *Drew v. Davis*, 10 Vt. 506; *Doe v. McQuilkin*, 8 Blackf. 335; *Kemper v. McClelland*, 19 Ohio, 324. This is upon the ground that the sale being based upon both the legal and the illegal tax, it is manifestly impossible afterwards to make the distinction, so that the act shall be partly a trespass and partly innocent. But when a party asks relief in equity before a sale against the collection of taxes, a part of which are legal, he will be required first to pay that part, or at least to so distinguish them from the others that process of injunction can be so framed as to leave the legal taxes to be enforced; and failing in this, his bill will be dismissed. *Conways v. Waverley*, 15 Mich. 257; *Palmer v. Napoleon*, 16 Mich. 176; *Hersey v. Supervisors of Milwaukee*, 16 Wis. 182; *Bond v. Kenosha*, 17 Wis. 288; *Myrick v. La Crosse*, 17 Wis. 442; *Roseberry v. Huff*, 27 Ind. 12.

As to the character and extent of the irregularities which should defeat the proceedings for the collection of taxes, we could not undertake to speak here. We think the statement in the text, that a failure to comply with any such requirements of the law as are made for the protection of

the owner's interest will prove fatal to a tax sale, will be found abundantly sustained by the authorities, while many of the cases go still further in making irregularities fatal. It appears to us that where the requirement of the law which has failed of observance was one which had regard simply to the due and orderly conduct of the proceedings, or to the protection of the public interest, as against the officer, so that to the tax-payer it is immaterial whether it was complied with or not, a failure to comply ought not to be recognized as a foundation for complaint by him. But those safeguards which the legislature has thrown around the estates of citizens, to protect them against unequal, unjust, and extortionate taxation, the courts are not at liberty to do away with by declaring them non-essential. To hold the requirement of the law in regard to them directory only, and not mandatory, is in effect to exercise a dispensing power over the laws. Mr. Blackwell, in his treatise on Tax Titles, has collected the cases on this subject industriously, and perhaps we shall be pardoned for saying also with a perceptible leaning against that species of conveyance. As illustrations how far the courts will go, in some cases, to sustain irregular taxation, where officers have acted in good faith, reference is made to *Kelley v. Corson*, 11 Wis. 1; *Hersey v. Supervisors of Milwaukee*, 16 Wis. 185. See also *Mills v. Gleason*, 11 Wis. 497, where the court endeavors to lay down a general rule as to the illegalities

general rule is applicable here, that where property is taken under statutory authority in derogation of common right, every requisite of the statute having a semblance of benefit to the owner must be complied with or the proceeding will be ineffectual.¹

which should render a tax roll invalid. A party bound to pay a tax, or any portion thereof, cannot get title to the land by neglecting payment and allowing a sale to be made at which he becomes the purchaser. *McMinn v. Whelan*, 27 Cal. 300. See *Butler v. Porter*, 13 Mich. 292; *Cooley on Taxation*, 346.

¹ See *ante*, pp. *74-*78. Also *Newell v. Wheeler*, 48 N. Y. 486; *Westfall v. Preston*, 49 N. Y. 349, 353; *Cooley on Taxation*, c. 15.

It should be stated that in Iowa, under legislation favorable to tax titles, the courts go farther in sustaining

them than in perhaps any other State. Reference is made to the following cases: *Eldridge v. Keuhl*, 27 Iowa, 160; *McReady v. Sexton*, 29 Iowa, 356; *Hurley v. Rowell*, 31 Iowa, 64; *Rima v. Cowan*, 31 Iowa, 125; *Thomas v. Steckle*, 32 Iowa, 71; *Henderson v. Oliver*, 32 Iowa, 512; *Bulkley v. Callanan*, 32 Iowa, 461; *Ware v. Little*, 35 Iowa, 234; *Jeffrey v. Brokaw*, 35 Iowa, 305; *Genther v. Fuller*, 36 Iowa, 604; *Leavitt v. Watson*, 37 Iowa, 93; *Phelps v. Meade*, 41 Iowa, 470. It may be useful to compare these cases with *Kimball v. Rosendale*, 42 Wis. 407.

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* CHAPTER XV.

THE EMINENT DOMAIN.

✓ EVERY sovereignty possesses buildings, lands, and other property, which it holds for the use of its officers and agents, to enable them to perform their public functions. It may also have property from the rents, issues, and profits, or perhaps the sale, of which it is expected the State will derive a revenue. Such property constitutes the ordinary domain of the State. In respect to its use, enjoyment, and alienation, the same principles apply which govern the management and control of like property of individuals; and the State is in fact but an individual proprietor, whose title and rights are to be tested, regulated, and governed by the same rules that would have pertained to the ownership of the same property by any of its citizens. There are also cases in which property is peculiarly devoted to the general use and enjoyment of the individual citizens who compose the organized society, but the regulation and control of which are vested in the State by virtue of its sovereignty. The State may be the proprietor of this property, and retain it for the common use, as a means of contributing to the general health, comfort, or happiness of the people; but generally it is not strictly the owner, but rather the governing and supervisory trustee of the public rights in such property, vested with the power and charged with the duty of so regulating, protecting, and controlling them, as to secure to each citizen the privilege to make them available for his purposes, so far as may be consistent with an equal enjoyment by every other citizen of the same privilege.¹ In some instances

¹ In *The Company of Free Fishers, &c. v. Gann*, 20 C. B. N. S. 1, it was held that the ownership of the Crown in the bed of navigable waters is for the benefit of the subject, and cannot be used in any such manner as to derogate from or interfere with the

right of navigation, which belongs by law to all the subjects of the realm. And that consequently the grantees of a particular portion, who occupied it for a fishery, could not be lawfully authorized to charge and collect anchorage dues from vessels anchoring

these rights are of such a nature, or the circumstances are such, that the most feasible mode of enabling every citizen to participate therein may seem to be for the State to transfer its control, wholly or partially, to individuals, either receiving by way of augmentation of the public revenues a compensation therefor, or securing in return a release to the citizens generally from some tax or charge which would have rested upon them in * respect to such rights, had the State retained the [* 524] usual control in its own hands, and borne the incidental burdens.

The rights of which we here speak are considered as pertaining to the State by virtue of an authority existing in every sovereignty, and which is called *the eminent domain*. Some of these are complete without any action on the part of the State; as is the case with the rights of navigation in its seas, lakes, and public rivers, the rights of fishery in public waters, and the right of the State to the precious metals which may be mined within its limits.¹ Others only become complete and are rendered effectual through the State displacing, either partially or wholly, the rights of private ownership and control; and this it accomplishes either by contract with the owner, by accepting his gift, or by appropriating his property against his will through an exercise of its superior authority. Of these, the common highway furnishes an example; the public rights therein being acquired either by the grant or dedication of the owner of the land over which they run, or by a species of forcible dispossession when the public necessity demands the way, and the private owner will neither give nor sell it. All these rights rest upon a principle which in every sovereignty is essential to its existence and perpetuity, and which, so far as when called into action it excludes pre-existing individual rights, is sometimes spoken of as being based upon an implied reservation by the government when its citizens acquire property from it or under its protection. And as there is not often occasion to speak of the eminent domain except in reference to those

therein. As regards public and exclusive rights of fishery in this country, see *Commonwealth v. Alger*, 7 Cush. 63; *Lakeman v. Burnham*, 7 Gray, 440; *Commonwealth v. Look*, 108 Mass. 452; Angell on Water-courses, § 65 *a*, and cases cited.

¹ 1 Bl. Com. 294; 3 Kent, 378, note. In California it has been decided that a grant of public lands by the government carries with it to the grantee the title to all mines. *Boggs v. Merced, &c. Co.*, 14 Cal. 279; *Moore v. Smaw*, 17 Cal. 199.

cases in which the government is called upon to appropriate property against the will of the owners, the right itself is generally defined as if it were restricted to such cases, and is said to be that superior right of property pertaining to the sovereignty by which the private property acquired by its citizens under its protection may be taken or its use controlled for the public benefit without regard to the wishes of its owners. More accurately, it is the rightful authority, which exists in every sovereignty, to control and regulate those rights of a public nature which pertain to its citizens in common, and to appropriate and control individual property for the public benefit, as the public safety, necessity, convenience, or welfare may demand.¹

[* 525] * When the existence of a particular power in the government is recognized on the ground of necessity, no delegation of the legislative power by the people can be held to vest authority in the department which holds it in trust, to bargain away such power, or to so tie up the hands of the government as to preclude its repeated exercise, as often and under such circumstances as the needs of the government may require. For if this were otherwise, the authority to make laws for the government and welfare of the State might be so exercised, in strict con-

¹ Vattel, c. 20, § 34; Bynkershoek, lib. 2, c. 15; Ang. on Water-courses, § 457; 2 Kent, 338-340; Redf. on Railw. c. 11, § 1. "The right which belongs to the society or to the sovereign of disposing, in case of necessity, and for the public safety, of all the wealth contained in the State, is called the eminent domain." *McKinty, J.*, in *Pollard's Lessee v. Hagan*, 3 How. 228. "Notwithstanding the grant to individuals, the highest and most exact idea of property remains in the government, or in the aggregate body of the people in their sovereign capacity; and they have a right to resume the possession of the property, in the manner directed by the constitution and laws of the State, whenever the public interest requires it. This right of resumption may be exercised, not only where the safety, but also where the interest or even the expediency, of the

State is concerned; as where the land of the individual is wanted for a road, canal, or other public improvement." *Walworth*, Chancellor, in *Beekman v. Saratoga and Schenectady R. R. Co.*, 3 Paige, 73. The right is inherent in all governments, and requires no constitutional provision to give it force. *Brown v. Beatty*, 34 Miss. 227; *Taylor v. Porter*, 4 Hill, 143. "Title to property is always held upon the implied condition that it must be surrendered to the government, either in whole or in part, when the public necessities, evidenced according to the established forms of law, demand." *Hogeboom, J.*, in *People v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 32 Barb. 112. And see *Heyward v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 7 N. Y. 314; *Water Works Co. v. Burkhart*, 41 Ind. 364; *Wier v. St. Paul, &c. R. R. Co.*, 18 Minn. 155.

formity with its constitution, as at length to preclude the State performing its ordinary and essential functions, and the agent chosen to govern the State might put an end to the State itself. It must follow that any legislative bargain in restraint of the complete, continuous, and repeated exercise of the right of eminent domain is unwarranted and void; and that provision of the Constitution of the United States which forbids the States violating the obligation of contracts could not be so construed as to render valid and effectual such a bargain, which originally was in excess of proper authority. Upon this subject we shall content ourselves with referring in this place to what has been said in another connection.¹

As under the peculiar American system the protection and regulation of private rights, privileges, and immunities in general properly pertain to the State governments, and those governments are expected to make provision for those conveniences and necessities which are usually provided for their citizens through the exercise of the right of eminent domain, the right itself, it would seem, must pertain to those governments also, rather than to the government of the nation; and such has been the conclusion of the authorities. In the new territories, however, where the government of the United States exercises sovereign authority, it possesses, * as incident thereto, the right of eminent [* 526] domain, which it may exercise directly or through the territorial governments; but this right passes from the nation to the newly formed State whenever the latter is admitted into the Union.² So far, however, as the general government may deem

¹ See *ante*, p. *281.

² Pollard's Lessee *v.* Hagan, 3 How. 212; Goodtitle *v.* Kibbee, 9 How. 471; Doe *v.* Beebe, 13 How. 25; United States *v.* The Railroad Bridge Co., 6 McLean, 517; Weber *v.* Harbor Commissioners, 18 Wall. 57; Swan *v.* Williams, 2 Mich. 427; Warren *v.* St. Paul, &c. R. R. Co., 18 Minn. 384. The States have sometimes assumed authority, under the eminent domain, to appropriate the property of individuals in order to donate it to the general government for national purposes; but the

right to do this would seem doubtful. The authority of the general government to appropriate private property for its needs is unquestionable; but every sovereignty must judge of its needs for itself, and the right to decide upon and supply them by dispossessing private rights cannot, as it seems to us, be assumed by any other authority without the incorporation of some new principle into the law of eminent domain. The following decisions have been made on this subject. In Reddall *v.* Bryan, 14 Md. 478, proceedings in Maryland,

it important to appropriate lands or other property for its own purposes, and to enable it to perform its functions, — as must sometimes be necessary in the case of forts, light-houses, military posts or roads, and other conveniences and necessities of government, — the general government may still exercise the authority, as well within the States as within the territory under its exclusive jurisdiction, and its right to do so may be supported by the same reasons which support the right in any case ; that is to say, the absolute necessity that the means in the government for performing its functions and perpetuating its existence should not be liable to be controlled or defeated by the want of consent of private parties, or of any other authority.¹

What Property is subject to the Right.

Every species of property which the public needs may require, and which government cannot lawfully appropriate under any other right, is subject to be seized and appropriated under the right of eminent domain.² Lands for the public ways ; timber, stone, and gravel with which to make or improve the public

under its laws, to appropriate lands for the purpose of supplying the city of Washington with water, were sustained. The opinion affirms the right generally to employ the State eminent domain for the purposes of the general government; but the court attach importance to the fact that in ceding its portion of the District of Columbia to the United States, "the State never intended to abandon all interest in the District. The relation, therefore, between the District of Columbia, composed of territory ceded by Maryland for certain purposes only, and the State of whose soil it forms a part, is more intimate and close than that which it bears to any other State." *Gilmer v. Lime Point*, 18 Cal. 229, was a proceeding in the State court, on the application of the United States by its agent, to condemn lands for the purposes of a light-house. The right to maintain it was

contested, but sustained. Similar decisions were made in *Burt v. Merchants' Ins. Co.*, 106 Mass. 356, and *Cummings v. Ash*, 50 N. H. 590. In *Trombley v. Auditor-General*, 23 Mich. 471, an act of the legislature authorizing the Governor to take proceedings to condemn lands for the use of the general government was held invalid, on the ground that every sovereignty possesses inherent authority to appropriate the property of its citizens or subjects for public uses, and must be the judge of its own needs. This view has since been approved by the United States Supreme Court. *Kohl v. United States*, 91 U. S. 367.

¹ *Kohl v. United States*, 91 U. S. Rep. 367; *Trombley v. Auditor-General*, 23 Mich. 471; *Darlington v. United States*, 82 Penn. St. 382.

² *People v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 32 Barb. 102; *Bailey v. Miltenberger*, 31 Penn. St. 37.

ways ;¹ buildings standing in the way of contemplated improvements, or which for any other reason it becomes necessary to take, remove, or destroy for the public good ;² streams of water ;³ corporate franchises ;⁴ and generally, it may be said, legal and

¹ *Wheelock v. Young*, 4 Wend. 647; *Lyon v. Jerome*, 15 Wend. 569; *Jerome v. Ross*, 7 Johns. Ch. 315; *Bliss v. Hosmer*, 15 Ohio, 44; *Watkins v. Walker Co.*, 18 Tex. 585. In *Eldridge v. Smith*, 34 Vt. 484, it was held competent for a railroad company to appropriate lands for piling the wood and lumber used on the road, and brought to it to be transported thereon.

² *Wells v. Somerset, &c. R. R. Co.*, 47 Me. 345. But the destruction of a private house during a fire to prevent the spreading of a conflagration has been held not to be an appropriation under the right of eminent domain, but an exercise of the police power. "The destruction was authorized by the law of overruling necessity; it was the exercise of a natural right belonging to every individual, not conferred by law, but tacitly excepted from all human codes." Per *Sherman*, Senator, in *Russell v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 2 Denio, 461, 473. See also *Sorocco v. Geary*, 3 Cal. 69; *Conwell v. Emrie*, 2 Ind. 35; *American Print Works v. Lawrence*, 21 N. J. 248; *Same v. Same*, 23 N. J. 590; *McDonald v. Redwing*, 13 Minn. 38; *Field v. Des Moines*, 39 Iowa, 575. The municipal corporation whose officers order the destruction is not liable for the damages unless expressly made so by statute. *White v. Charleston*, 2 Hill (S. C.), 571; *Dunbar v. San Francisco*, 1 Cal. 355; *Stone v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 25 Wend. 157; *Taylor v. Plymouth*, 8 Met. 462; *Ruggles v. Nantucket*, 11 Cush. 433.

³ *Gardner v. Newburg*, 2 Johns. Ch. 162. In this case a stream was

appropriated in order to supply a town with water. The appropriation might, of course, be made for any other object of public utility; and a stream may even be diverted from its course to remove it out of the way of a public improvement when not appropriated. See *Johnson v. Atlantic, &c. R. R. Co.*, 35 N. H. 569; *Baltimore, &c. R. R. Co. v. Magruder*, 34 Md. 79; s. c. 6 Am. Rep. 310. But in general, in constructing a public work, it is the duty of those concerned to avoid diverting streams, and to construct the necessary culverts, bridges, &c., for that purpose. *March v. Portsmouth, &c. R. R. Co.*, 19 N. H. 372; *Boughton v. Carter*, 18 Johns. 405; *Rowe v. Addison*, 34 N. H. 306; *Proprietors, &c. v. Nashua and Lowell R. R. Co.*, 10 Cush. 388; *Haynes v. Burlington*, 38 Vt. 350. And see *Pettigrew v. Janesville*, 25 Wis. 23; *Arimond v. Green Bay Co.*, 31 Wis. 316; *Stein v. Burden*, 24 Ala. 130. As to the obligation of a railroad company to compensate parties whose lands are flooded by excavations or embankments of the company, see *Brown v. Cayuga, &c. R. R. Co.*, 12 N. Y. 486; *Norris v. Vt. Cent. R. R. Co.*, 28 Vt. 99. Compare *Eaton v. Boston, C. & M. R. R. Co.*, 51 N. H. 504, where it was decided that a corporation which flooded a man's land by removing a natural protection in the construction of their road was liable for the injury, even though their road was constructed with due care, with *Bellinger v. N. Y. Central R. R. Co.*, 22 N. Y. 42, and other cases cited, *post*, pp. *570, *571.

⁴ *Piscataqua Bridge v. New Hampshire Bridge*, 7 N. H. 35; *Crosby v.*

[* 527] equitable rights of * every description are liable to be thus appropriated. From this statement, however, must be excepted money, or that which in ordinary use passes as such, and which the government may reach by taxation, and also rights in action, which can only be available when made to produce money; neither of which can it be needful to take under this power.¹

Hanover, 36 N. H. 420; Boston Water Power Co. v. Boston and Worcester R. R. Co., 23 Pick. 360; Central Bridge Corporation v. Lowell, 4 Gray, 474; West River Bridge v. Dix, 6 How. 507; Richmond R. R. Co. v. Louisa R. R. Co., 13 How. 81, per *Grier, J.*; Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Co. v. Baltimore and Ohio R. R. Co., 4 Gill & J. 1; State v. Noyes, 47 Me. 189; Red River Bridge Co. v. Clarksville, 1 Sneed, 176; Armington v. Barnet, 15 Vt. 745; White River Turnpike Co. v. Vermont Central R. R. Co., 21 Vt. 594; Newcastle, &c. R. R. Co. v. Peru and Indiana R. R. Co., 3 Ind. 464; Springfield v. Connecticut River R. R. Co., 4 Cush. 63; Forward v. Hampshire, &c. Canal Co., 22 Pick. 462; Commonwealth v. Pittsburg, &c. R. R. Co., 58 Penn. St. 50. "The only true rule of policy as well as of law is, that a grant for one public purpose must yield to another more urgent and important, and this can be effected without any infringement on the constitutional rights of the subject. If in such cases suitable and adequate provision is made by the legislature for the compensation of those whose property or franchise is injured or taken away, there is no violation of public faith or private right. The obligation of the contract created by the original charter is thereby recognized." Per *Bigelow, J.*, in *Central Bridge Corporation v. Lowell*, 4 Gray, 482. This subject receives a very full and satisfactory examination by Judges *Pearson* and *Sharswood*, in *Commonwealth v.*

Pennsylvania Canal Co., 66 Penn. St. 41; s. c. 5 Am. Rep. 329. In *Central City Horse Railway Co. v. Fort Clark Horse Railway Co.*, 87 Ill. 523, this subject is somewhat considered. The question involved is thus stated by the court: "Can a competing horse railway company in an incorporated city acquire by compulsion a title to or the joint use of [a part of] the track and superstructure of another like corporation, and for the express purpose of making the tracks so compulsorily taken a portion of its own line?" This question is answered in the negative, though at the same time it is intimated that "proceedings might be instituted, *perhaps*, to condemn the entire road and franchise, and thus pass it over as an entirety to the competing road."

¹ Property of individuals cannot be appropriated by the State under this power for the mere purpose of adding to the revenues of the State. Thus it has been held in Ohio, that in appropriating the water of streams for the purposes of a canal, more could not be taken than was needed for that object, with a view to raising a revenue by selling or leasing it. "The State, notwithstanding the sovereignty of her character, can take only sufficient water from private streams for the purposes of the canal. So far the law authorizes the commissioners to invade private right as to take what may be necessary for canal navigation, and to this extent authority is conferred by the constitution, provided a compensation be paid to the owner. The principle is founded on

Legislative Authority requisite.

The right to appropriate private property to public uses lies *dormant in the State, until legislative action is [* 528] had, pointing out the occasions, the modes, conditions, and agencies for its appropriation.¹ Private property can only be taken pursuant to law; but a legislative act declaring the necessity, being the customary mode in which that fact is determined, must be held to be for this purpose "the law of the land," and no further finding or adjudication can be essential, unless the constitution of the State has expressly required it.² When, how-

the superior claims of a whole community over an individual citizen; but then in those cases only where private property is wanted for *public use*, or demanded by the *public welfare*. We know of no instances in which it has or can be taken, even by State authority, for the mere purpose of raising a revenue by sale or otherwise; and the exercise of such a power would be utterly destructive of individual right, and break down all the distinctions between *meum* and *tuum*, and annihilate them for ever at the pleasure of the State." *Wood, J.*, in *Buckingham v. Smith*, 10 Ohio, 296. To the same effect is *Cooper v. Williams*, 5 Ohio, 392.

Taking money under the right of eminent domain, when it must be compensated in money afterwards, could be nothing more nor less than a forced loan, only to be justified as a last resort in a time of extreme peril, where neither the credit of the government nor the power of taxation could be made available. It is impossible to lay down rules for such a case, except such as the law of overruling necessity, which for the time being sets aside all the rules and protections of private right, shall then prescribe. See *post*, p. *530, note.

¹ *Barrow v. Page*, 5 Hayw. 97; *Railroad Co. v. Lake*, 71 Ill. 333; *Allen v. Jones*, 47 Ind. 438. It cannot be presumed that any corporation has au-

thority to exercise the right of eminent domain until the grant be shown. *Phillips v. Dunkirk, &c. R. R. Co.*, 78 Penn. St. 177; *Allen v. Jones*, 47 Ind. 438.

² "Whatever may be the theoretical foundation for the right of eminent domain, it is certain that it attaches as an incident to every sovereignty, and constitutes a condition upon which all property is holden. When the public necessity requires it, private rights to property must yield to the paramount right of the sovereign power. We have repeatedly held that the character of the work for which the property is taken, and not the means or agencies employed for its construction, determines the question of power in the exercise of this right. It requires no judicial condemnation to subject private property to public uses. Like the power to tax, it resides in the legislative department to whom the delegation is made. It may be exercised directly or indirectly by that body; and it can only be restrained by the judiciary when its limits have been exceeded, or its authority has been abused or perverted." *Kramer v. Cleveland and Pittsburg R. R. Co.*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 146. The mode of exercise is left to the legislative discretion, when not restrained by the constitution. *Secombe v. Railroad Co.*, 23 Wall. 109.

ever, action is had for this purpose, there must be kept in view that general as well as reasonable and just rule, that, whenever in pursuance of law the property of an individual is to be divested by proceedings against his will, a strict compliance must be had with all the provisions of law which are made for his protection and benefit, or the proceeding will be ineffectual.¹ Those provisions must be regarded as in the nature of conditions precedent, which are not only to be observed and complied with before the right of the property owner is disturbed, but the party claiming authority under the adverse proceeding must show affirmatively such compliance. For example, if by a statute prescribing the mode of exercising the right of eminent domain, the damages to be assessed in favor of the property owner for the taking of his land are to be so assessed by disinterested freeholders of the municipality, the proceedings will be ineffectual unless they show on their face that the appraisers were such freeholders and inhabitants.² So if a statute only authorizes proceedings *in invitum* after an effort shall have been made to agree with the owner on the compensation to be paid, the fact of such effort and its failure must appear.³ So if the statute vests the title to lands [* 529] appropriated in the State or in * a corporation on payment therefor being made, it is evident that, under the rule stated, the payment is a condition precedent to the passing

¹ *Gillinwater v. Mississippi, &c. R. R. Co.*, 13 Ill. 1; *Stanford v. Worn*, 27 Cal. 171; *Dalton v. Water Commissioners*, 41 Cal. 222; *Stockton v. Whitmore*, 50 Cal. 554; *Supervisors of Doddridge v. Stout*, 9 W. Va. 703; *Mitchell v. Illinois, &c. Coal Co.*, 68 Ill. 286; *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Smith*, 78 Ill. 96; *Springfield, &c. R. R. Co. v. Hall*, 67 Ill. 79; *Powers's Appeal*, 29 Mich. 504; *Kroop v. Forman*, 31 Mich. 144; *Arnold v. Decatur*, 29 Mich. 77; *Lund v. New Bedford*, 121 Mass. 286; *Wamesit Power Co. v. Allen*, 120 Mass. 352; *Bohlman v. Green Bay, &c. R. R. Co.*, 40 Wis. 157; *Moore v. Railway Co.*, 34 Wis. 173; *United States v. Reed*, 56 Mo. 565; *Decatur County v. Humphreys*,

47 Geo. 565; *Commissioners v. Beckwith*, 10 Kan. 603.

² *Nichols v. Bridgeport*, 23 Conn. 189; *Judson v. Bridgeport*, 25 Conn. 428; *People v. Brighton*, 20 Mich. 57; *Moore v. Railway Co.*, 34 Wis. 173.

³ *Reitenbaugh v. Chester Valley R. R. Co.*, 21 Penn. St. 100; *Ellis v. Pacific R. R. Co.*, 51 Mo. 200; *United States v. Reed*, 56 Mo. 565; *Burt v. Brigham*, 117 Mass. 307; *West Va. Transportation Co. v. Volcanic Oil and Coal Co.*, 5 W. Va. 382. But it was held in this last case that if the owner appears in proceedings taken for the assessment of damages, and contests the amount without objecting the want of any such attempt, the court must presume it to have been made.

of the title.¹ And where a general railroad law authorized routes to be surveyed by associated persons desirous of constructing roads, and provided that if the legislature, on being petitioned for the purpose, should decide by law that a proposed road would be of sufficient utility to justify its construction, then the company, when organized, might proceed to take land for the way, it was held that, until the route was approved by the legislature, no authority could be claimed under the law to appropriate land for the purpose.² These cases must suffice as illustrations of a gen-

¹ *Stacy v. Vermont Central R. R. Co.*, 27 Vt. 44. By the section of the statute under which the land was appropriated, it was provided that when land or other real estate was taken by the corporation, for the use of their road, and the parties were unable to agree upon the price of the land, the same should be ascertained and determined by the commissioners, together with the costs and charges accruing thereon *and upon the payment of the same, or by depositing the amount in a bank, as should be ordered by the commissioners, the corporation should be deemed to be seized and possessed of the lands.* Held, that, until the payment was made, the company had no right to enter upon the land to construct the road, or to exercise any act of ownership over it; and that a court of equity would enjoin them from exercising any such right, or they might be prosecuted in trespass at law. This case follows *Baltimore and Susquehanna R. R. Co. v. Nesbit*, 10 How. 395, and *Bloodgood v. Mohawk and Hudson R. R. Co.*, 18 Wend. 10, where the statutory provisions were similar. See further *State v. Seymour*, 35 N. J. 56; *Cameron v. Supervisors*, 47 Miss. 264; *St. Joseph, &c. R. R. Co. v. Callender*, 13 Kan. 496; *Paris v. Mason*, 37 Tex. 447; *People v. McRoberts*, 62 Ill. 38; *St. Louis, &c. R. R. Co. v. Teters*, 68 Ill. 144; *Sherman v. Milwaukee, &c. R. R. Co.*, 40 Wis. 645; *Bohlman*

v. Green Bay, &c. R. R. Co., 40 Wis. 157; *Brady v. Bronson*, 45 Cal. 640; *Delphi v. Evans*, 36 Ind. 90; *Eidemiller v. Wyandotte*, 2 Dill. 376. In the case in *Howard* it is said: "It can hardly be questioned that without acceptance in the mode prescribed [*i. e.*, by payment of the damages assessed], the company were not bound; that if they had been dissatisfied with the estimate placed on the land, or could have procured a more eligible site for the location of their road, they would have been at liberty, before such acceptance, wholly to renounce the inquisition. The proprietors of the land could have no authority to coerce the company into its adoption." *Daniel, J.*, 10 How. 399.

² *Gillinwater v. Mississippi, &c. R. R. Co.*, 13 Ill. 1. "The statute says that, after a certain other act shall have been passed, the company may then proceed to take private property for the use of their road; that is equivalent to saying that that right shall not be exercised without such subsequent act. The right to take private property for public use is one of the highest prerogatives of the sovereign power; and here the legislature has, in language not to be mistaken, expressed its intention to reserve that power until it could judge for itself whether the proposed road would be of sufficient public utility to justify the use of this high pre-

eral rule, which indeed would seem to be too plain and obvious to require either illustration or discussion.¹

[* 530] * So the powers granted by such statutes are not to be enlarged by intendment, especially where they are being exercised by a corporation by way of appropriation of land for its corporate purposes. "There is no rule more familiar or better settled than this: that grants of corporate power, being in derogation of common right, are to be strictly construed; and this is especially the case where the power claimed is a delegation of the right of eminent domain, one of the highest powers of sovereignty pertaining to the State itself, and interfering most seriously and often vexatiously with the ordinary rights of property."² It has accordingly been held that where a railroad company was authorized by law to "enter upon any land to survey, lay down, and construct its road," "to locate and construct branch roads," &c., to appropriate land "for necessary side tracks," and "a right of way over adjacent lands sufficient to enable such company to construct and repair its road," and the company had located, and was engaged in the construction of its main road along the north side of a town, it was not authorized under this grant of power to appropriate a temporary right of way for a term of years along the south side of the town, to be used as a substitute for the main track whilst the latter was in process of construction.³ And substantially the same strict rule is applied when the State itself seeks to appropriate private property; for it is not unreasonable that the property owner should have the right to insist that the State, which selects the occasion and prescribes the conditions for the appropriation of his property, should confine its action strictly within the limits which it has marked out as sufficient. So high a prerogative as that of divesting one's estate against his will

rogative. It did not intend to cast this power away, to be gathered up and used by any who might choose to exercise it." Ibid. p. 4.

¹ See further the cases of *Atlantic and Ohio R. R. Co. v. Sullivan*, 5 Ohio, N. S. 277; *Parsons v. Howe*, 41 Me. 218; *Atkinson v. Marietta and Cincinnati R. R. Co.*, 15 Ohio, N. S. 21.

² *Currier v. Marietta and Cincinnati R. R. Co.*, 11 Ohio, N. S. 228;

Miami Coal Co. v. Wigton, 19 Ohio, N. S. 560. See *ante*, pp. *394—*396.

³ *Currier v. Marietta and Cincinnati R. R. Co.*, 11 Ohio, N. S. 228. And see *Gilmer v. Lime Point*, 19 Cal. 47; *Bensley v. Mountain Lake, &c. Co.*, 13 Cal. 306; *Brunnig v. N. O. Canal and Banking Co.*, 12 La. Ann. 541; *West Virginia Transportation Co. v. Volcanic Oil and Coal Co.*, 5 W. Va. 382.

should only be exercised where the plain letter of the law permits it, and under a careful observance of the formalities prescribed for the owner's protection.

The Purpose.

The definition given of the right of eminent domain implies that the purpose for which it may be exercised must not be a mere private purpose; and it is conceded on all hands that the legislature has no power, in any case, to take the property of one individual and pass it over to another without reference to some use to which it is to be applied for the public benefit.¹ "The right of eminent domain," it has been said, "does not imply a right in the sovereign power to take the property of one citizen and transfer it to another, even for a full compensation, where the public interest will be in no way promoted by such transfer."²

It seems not to be allowable, therefore, to authorize *pri- [* 531] vate roads to be laid out across the lands of unwilling parties by an exercise of this right. The easement in such a case would be the property of him for whom it was established; and

¹ In a work of this character, we have no occasion to consider the right of the government to seize and appropriate to its own use the property of individuals in time of war, through its military authorities. That is a right which depends on the existence of hostilities, and the suspension, partially or wholly, of the civil laws. For recent cases in which it has been considered, see *Mitchell v. Harmony*, 13 How. 128; *Wilson v. Crockett*, 43 Mo. 216; *Williams v. Wickerman*, 44 Mo. 484; *Yost v. Stout*, 4 Cold. 205; *Sutton v. Tiller*, 6 Cold. 593; *Taylor v. Nashville, &c. R. R. Co.*, 6 Cold. 646; *Coolidge v. Guthrie*, 8 Am. Law Reg. n. s. 22; *Echols v. Staunton*, 3 W. Va. 574; *Wilson v. Franklin*, 63 N. C. 259; *Ferguson v. Loar*, 5 Bush, 689.

² *Beekman v. Saratoga and Schenectady R. R. Co.*, 3 Paige, 73; *Hepburn's Case*, 3 Bland, 95; *Sadler v. Langham*, 34 Ala. 311; *Pittsburg v.*

Scott, 1 Penn. St. 139; *Matter of Albany Street*, 11 Wend. 149; *Matter of John and Cherry Streets*, 19 Wend. 659; *Cooper v. Williams*, 5 Ohio, 393; *Buckingham v. Smith*, 10 Ohio, 296; *Reeves v. Treasurer of Wood Co.*, 8 Ohio, n. s. 333. See this subject considered on principle and authority by Senator *Tracy* in *Bloodgood v. Mohawk and Hudson R. R. Co.*, 18 Wend. 55 *et seq.* See also *Embury v. Conner*, 3 N. Y. 511; *Kramer v. Cleveland and Pittsburgh R. R. Co.*, 5 Ohio, n. s. 146; *Pratt v. Brown*, 3 Wis. 603; *Concord R. R. v. Greeley*, 17 N. H. 47; *N. Y. and Harlem R. R. Co. v. Kip*, 46 N. Y. 546; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 385. The power can only be exercised to supply some existing public need or to gain some present public advantage; not with a view to contingent results dependent on a projected speculation. *Edge-wood R. R. Co.'s Appeal*, 79 Penn. St. 257.

although the owner would not be deprived of the fee in the land, the beneficial use and exclusive enjoyment of his property would in greater or less degree be interfered with. Nor would it be material to inquire what *quantum* of interest would pass from him: it would be sufficient that some interest, the appropriation of which detracted from his right and authority, and interfered with his exclusive possession as owner, had been taken against his will; and if taken for a purely private purpose, it would be unlawful.¹ Nor could it be of importance that the public would

¹ Taylor v. Porter, 4 Hill, 142, per Bronson, J.; Clark v. White, 2 Swan, 540; White v. White, 5 Barb. 474; Sadler v. Langham, 34 Ala. 811; Pittsburgh v. Scott, 1 Penn. St. 139; Nesbitt v. Trumbo, 39 Ill. 110; Osborn v. Hart, 24 Wis. 90; s. c. 1 Am. Rep. 161; Tyler v. Beacher, 44 Vt. 648; Bankhead v. Brown, 25 Iowa, 540; Witham v. Osborn, 4 Oreg. 318; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 287; Stewart v. Hartman, 46 Ind. 331; Wild v. Deig, 43 Ind. 455; s. c. 13 Am. Rep. 399; White v. Clark, 2 Swan, 230; Hickman's Case, 4 Harr. 580; Robinson v. Swope, 12 Bush, 21. A neighborhood road is only a private road, and taking land for it would not be for a public use. Dickey v. Tension, 27 Mo. 373. But see as to this Ferris v. Bramble, 5 Ohio, n. s. 109; Bell v. Prouty, 43 Vt. 299; Whittingham v. Bowen, 22 Vt. 317; Proctor v. Andover, 42 N. H. 348. To avoid this difficulty, it is provided by the constitutions of some of the States that private roads may be laid out under proceedings corresponding to those for the establishment of highways. There are provisions to that effect in the Constitutions of New York, Georgia, and Michigan. But in Harvey v. Thomas, 10 Watts, 65, it was held that the right might be exercised in order to the establishment of private ways from coal fields to connect them with the public improvements, there being nothing in the constitution forbidding it. See

also The Pocopson Road, 16 Penn. St. 15; Sherman v. Buick, 32 Cal. 487. But this doctrine is directly opposed to Young v. McKenzie, 3 Geo. 44; Taylor v. Porter, 4 Hill, 146; Buffalo and N. Y. R. R. Co. v. Brainerd, 9 N. Y. 108; Bradley v. N. Y. and N. H. R. R. Co., 21 Conn. 305; Reeves v. Treasurer of Wood Co., 8 Ohio, n. s. 344, and many other cases; though possibly convenient access to the great coal fields of the State might be held to be so far a matter of general concern as to support an exercise of the power on the ground of the public benefit. In Eldridge v. Smith, 34 Vt. 481, it was held that the manufacture of railroad cars was not so legitimately and necessarily connected with the management of a railroad that the company would be authorized to appropriate lands therefor. So, also, of land for the erection of dwelling-houses to rent by railroad companies to their employes. But under authority to a railroad company to take land for constructing and operating its road, it may take what is needful for depot grounds. N. Y. and Harlaem R. R. Co. v. Kip, 46 N. Y. 546; s. c. 7 Am. Rep. 385.

In the text we have stated what is unquestionably the result of the authorities; though if the question were an open one, it might well be debated whether the right to authorize the appropriation of the property of individuals did not rest rather upon grounds of general public policy than

receive incidental benefits, such as usually spring from the improvement of lands or the establishment of prosperous private enterprises: the *public use* implies a possession, occupation, and enjoyment of the land by the public at large, or by public agencies;¹ and a due protection to the rights of private property will preclude the government from seizing it in the hands of the owner, and turning it over to another on vague grounds of public benefit to spring from the more profitable use to which the latter may devote it.

We find ourselves somewhat at sea, however, when we undertake to define, * in the light of the judicial decisions, [* 532] what constitutes a public use. It has been said by a learned jurist that, “if the public interest can be in any way promoted by the taking of private property, it must rest in the wisdom of the legislature to determine whether the benefit to the public will be of sufficient importance to render it expedient for them to exercise the right of eminent domain and to authorize an interference with the private rights of individuals for that purpose.”² It is upon this principle that the legislatures of several of the States have authorized the condemnation of the lands of individuals for mill sites, when from the nature of the country such mill sites could not be obtained for the accommodation of the inhabitants without overflowing the lands thus condemned. Upon the same principle of public benefit, not only the agents of the government, but also individuals and corporate bodies, have been authorized to take private property for the purpose of making public highways, turnpike roads, and canals; of erecting and constructing wharves and basins; of establishing ferries; of

upon the public purpose to which it was proposed to devote it. There are many cases in which individuals or private corporations have been empowered to appropriate the property of others when the general good demanded it, though the purpose was no more *public* than it is in any case where benefits are to flow to the community generally from a private enterprise. The case of appropriations for mill-dams, railroads, and drains to improve lands are familiar examples. These appropriations have

been sanctioned under an application of the term “public purpose,” which might also justify the laying out of private roads, when private property could not otherwise be made available. Upon this general subject the reader is referred to an article by Hon. J. V. Campbell in the “Bench and Bar,” for July, 1871.

¹ Per *Tracy*, Senator, in *Bloodgood v. Mohawk and Hudson R. R. Co.*, 18 Wend. 60.

² 2 Kent Com. 340.

those afforded by the common highway, over which any one may pass with his own vehicles, the government may establish the higher grade of highways, upon some of which only its own vehicles can be allowed to run, while others, differently constructed, shall be open to use by all on payment of toll. The common highway is kept in repair by assessments of labor and money; the tolls paid upon turnpikes, or the fares on railways, are the equivalents to these assessments; and when these improved ways are required by law to be kept open for use by the public impartially, they also may properly be called highways, and the use to which land for their construction is put be denominated a public use. The government also provides court-houses for the administration of justice; buildings for its seminaries of instruction;¹ aqueducts to convey pure and wholesome water into large towns;² it builds levees to prevent the country being overflowed by the rising streams;³ it may cause drains to be constructed to relieve swamps and marshes of their stagnant water;⁴ and other measures of general utility, in which the public at large are interested, and which require the appropriation of private property, are also within the power, where they fall within the reasons underlying the cases mentioned.⁵

¹ *Williams v. School District*, 33 Vt. 271. See *Hooper v. Bridgewater*, 102 Mass. 512; *Long v. Fuller*, 68 Penn. 170.

² *Reddall v. Bryan*, 14 Md. 444; *Kane v. Baltimore*, 15 Md. 240; *Gardner v. Newburg*, 2 Johns. Ch. 162; *Ham v. Salem*, 100 Mass. 350; *Burden v. Stein*, 27 Ala. 104.

³ *Mithoff v. Carrollton*, 12 La. Ann. 185; *Cash v. Whitworth*, 13 La. Ann. 401; *Inge v. Police Jury*, 14 La. Ann. 117.

⁴ *Anderson v. Kerns Draining Co.*, 14 Ind. 199; *Reeves v. Treasurer of Wood County*, 8 Ohio, n. s. 344. See a clear statement of the general principle and its necessity in the last-mentioned case. The drains, however, which can be authorized to be cut across the land of unwilling parties, or for which individuals can be taxed, must not be mere private

drains, but must have reference to the public health, convenience, or welfare. *Reeves v. Treasurer, &c.*, *supra*. And see *People v. Nearing*, 27 N. Y. 306. It is said in a recent case that an act for the drainage of a large quantity of land, which in its present condition is not only worthless for cultivation but unfit for residence, and for an assessment of the cost by benefits, is for a purpose sufficiently public to justify an exercise of the right of eminent domain. *Matter of Drainage of Lands*, 35 N. J. 497. It is competent under the eminent domain to appropriate and remove a dam owned by private parties, in order to reclaim a considerable body of lands flowed by means of it, paying the owner of the dam its value. *Talbot v. Hudson*, 16 Gray, 417.

⁵ Such, for instance, as the construction of a public park, which, in

[* 534] * Whether the power of eminent domain can rightfully be exercised in the condemnation of lands for manufacturing purposes, where the manufactories are to be owned and occupied by individuals, is a question upon which the authorities are at variance. Saw-mills, grist-mills, and various other manufactories are certainly a public necessity; and while the country is new, and capital not easily attainable for their erection, it sometimes seems to be essential that government should offer large inducements to parties who will supply this necessity. Before steam came into use, water was almost the sole reliance for motive power; and as reservoirs were generally necessary for this purpose, it would sometimes happen that the owner of a valuable mill site was unable to render it available, because the owners of lands which must be flowed to obtain a reservoir would neither consent to the construction of a dam, nor sell their lands except at extravagant and inadmissible prices. The legislatures in some of the States have taken the matter in hand, and have surmounted the difficulty, sometimes by authorizing the land to be appropriated, and at other times by permitting the erection of the dam, but requiring the mill owner to pay annually to the proprietor of the land the damages caused by the flowing, to be assessed in some impartial mode.¹ The reasons for such statutes have been growing weaker with the introduction of steam power and the progress of improvement, but their validity has repeatedly been recognized in some of the States, and probably the same courts would continue still to recognize it, notwithstanding the

large cities, is as much a matter of public utility as a railway or a supply of pure water. See *Matter of Central Park Extension*, 16 Abb. Pr. Rep. 56; *Owners of Ground v. Mayor, &c. of Albany*, 15 Wend. 374; *Brooklyn Park Com'rs v. Armstrong*, 45 N. Y. 234; s. c. 6 Am. Rep. 70; *County Court v. Griswold*, 58 Mo. 175. Or by a boom company for the purposes of a boom. *Patterson v. Mississippi, &c. Boom Co.*, 3 Dill. 465. Or sewers in cities. *Hildreth v. Lowell*, 11 Gray, 345. A city may be authorized to appropriate lands in order to fill them up, and thereby abate a nuisance upon them. *Dingley*

v. Boston, 100 Mass. 544. A private corporation may be empowered to exercise the right of eminent domain to obtain a way along which to lay pipe for the transportation of oil to a railroad or navigable water. *West Va. Transportation Co. v. Volcanic Oil and Coal Co.*, 5 W. Va. 382. It is held in *Evergreen Cemetery v. New Haven*, 43 Conn. 234, that lands may be appropriated under this power for a cemetery; but in *Matter of Deansville Cemetery Association*, 66 N. Y. 569, this is denied.

¹ See Angell on Watercourses, c. 12, for references to the statutes on this subject.

public necessity may no longer appear to demand such laws.¹ The rights granted by these laws to mill owners are said by Chief Justice *Shaw*, of Massachusetts, to be “granted for the better use of the water power, upon considerations of general policy and the general good;”² and in this view, and in order to render available a valuable property which might otherwise be made of little use by narrow, selfish, and * un- [* 535] friendly conduct on the part of individuals, such laws may perhaps be sustained on the same grounds which support an exercise of the right of eminent domain to protect, drain, and render valuable the lands which, by the overflow of a river, might otherwise be an extensive and worthless swamp.³

¹ “The encouragement of mills has always been a favorite object with the legislature; and though the reasons for it may have ceased, the favor of the legislature continues.” *Wolcott Woollen Manufacturing Co. v. Upham*, 5 Pick. 294. The practice in Michigan has been different. See *Ryerson v. Brown*, 35 Mich. 333.

² *French v. Braintree Manufacturing Co.*, 23 Pick. 220.

³ Action on the case for raising a dam across the Merrimac River, by which a mill stream emptying into that river, above the site of said dam, was set back and overflowed, and a mill of the plaintiff situated thereon, and the mill privilege, were damaged and destroyed. Demurrer to the declaration. The defendant company were chartered for the purpose of constructing a dam across the Merrimac River, and constructing one or more locks and canals, in connection with said dam, to remove obstructions in said river by falls and rapids, and to create a water power to be used for mechanical and manufacturing purposes. The defendants claimed that they were justified in what they had done, by an act of the legislature exercising the sovereign power of the State, in the right of eminent domain; that the plaintiff's property in the mill and mill privilege was taken and ap-

propriated under this right; and that his remedy was by a claim of damages under the act, and not by action at common law as for a wrongful and unwarrantable encroachment upon his right of property. *Shaw*, Ch. J.: “It is contended that if this act was intended to authorize the defendant company to take the mill power and mill of the plaintiff, it was void because it was not taken for public use, and it was not within the power of the government in the exercise of the right of eminent domain. This is the main question. In determining it, we must look to the declared purposes of the act; and if a public use is declared, it will be so held, unless it manifestly appears by the provisions of the act that they can have no tendency to advance and promote such public use. The declared purposes are to improve the navigation of the Merrimac River, and to create a large mill power for mechanical and manufacturing purposes. In general, whether a particular structure, as a bridge, or a lock, or canal, or road, is for the public use, is a question for the legislature, and which may be presumed to have been correctly decided by them. *Commonwealth v. Breed*, 4 Pick. 463. That the improvement of the navigation of a river is done for the public use has

[* 536] * On the other hand, it is said that the legislature of New York has never exercised the right of eminent domain in favor of mills of any kind, and that "sites for steam-engines, hotels, churches, and other public conveniences, might as well be taken by the exercise of this extraordinary power."¹ Similar views have been taken by the Supreme Courts of Alabama and Michigan.² It is quite possible that, in any State in

been too frequently decided and acted upon to require authorities. And so to create a wholly artificial navigation by canals. The establishment of a great mill power for manufacturing purposes, as an object of great public interest, especially since manufacturing has come to be one of the great industrial pursuits of the Commonwealth, seems to have been regarded by the legislature, and sanctioned by the jurisprudence of the Commonwealth, and in our judgment rightly so, in determining what is a public use, justifying the exercise of right of eminent domain. See St. 1825, c. 148, incorporating the Salem Mill Dam Corporation; Boston and Roxbury Mill Dam Corporation v. Newman, 12 Pick. 467. The act since passed, and the cases since decided on this ground, are very numerous. That the erection of this dam would have a strong and direct tendency to advance both these public objects, there is no doubt. We are, therefore, of opinion that the powers conferred on the corporation by this act were so done within the scope of the authority of the legislature, and were not a violation of the Constitution of the Commonwealth." Hazen v. Essex Company, 12 Cush. 477. See also Boston and Roxbury Mill Corporation v. Newman, 12 Pick. 467; Fiske v. Framingham Manufacturing Co., 12 Pick. 67; Harding v. Goodlett, 3 Yerg. 41. The courts of Wisconsin have sustained such laws. Newcome v. Smith, 1 Chand. 71; Thien v. Voegtlander, 3 Wis. 461; Pratt v. Brown, 3 Wis. 603. But with some

hesitation of late. See Fisher v. Horicon Co., 10 Wis. 351; Curtis v. Whipple, 24 Wis. 350. And see the note of Judge Redfield to Allen v. Inhabitants of Jay, Law Reg., Aug. 1873, p. 493. And those of Connecticut. Olmstead v. Camp, 33 Conn. 532. And of Maine. Jordan v. Woodward, 40 Me. 317. And of Minnesota. Miller v. Troost, 14 Minn. 365. And of Kansas. Venard v. Cross, 8 Kan. 248; Harding v. Funk, 8 Kan. 315. And of Indiana. Hawkins v. Lawrence, 8 Blackf. 266. And they have been enforced elsewhere without question. Burgess v. Clark, 13 Ired. 109; McAfee's Heirs v. Kennedy, 1 Lit. 92; Smith v. Connelly, 1 T. B. Monr. 58; Shackelford v. Coffey, 4 J. J. Marsh. 40; Crenshaw v. Slate River Co., 6 Rand. 245. The whole subject was very fully considered and the validity of such legislation affirmed in Great Falls Manuf. Co. v. Fernald, 47 N. H. 444. And see Ash v. Cummings, 50 N. H. 591. In Loughbridge v. Harris, 42 Geo. 500, an act for the condemnation of land for a grist-mill was held unconstitutional, though the tolls were regulated and discrimination forbidden. In Newell v. Smith, 15 Wis. 101, it was held not constitutional to authorize the appropriation of the property, and leave the owner no remedy except to subsequently recover its value in an action of trespass.

¹ Hay v. Cohoes Company, 3 Barb. 47.

² Ryerson v. Brown, 35 Mich. 333; Sadler v. Langham, 34 Ala. 311. In this last case, however, it was as-

which this question would be entirely a new one, and where it would not be embarrassed by long acquiescence, or by either judicial or legislative precedents, it might be held that these laws are not sound in principle, and that there is no such necessity, and consequently no such imperative reasons of public policy, as would be essential to support an exercise of the right of eminent domain.¹ But accepting as correct the decisions which have been made, it must be conceded that the term "public use," as employed in the law of eminent domain, has a meaning much controlled by the necessity, and somewhat different from that which it bears generally.²

sumed that lands for the purposes of grist-mills *which grind for toll*, and were required to serve the public impartially, might, under proper legislation, be taken under the right of eminent domain. The case of *Loughbridge v. Harris*, 42 Geo. 500, is *contra*. In *Tyler v. Beacher*, 44 Vt. 648, it was held not competent, where the mills were subject to no such requirement. See the case, 8 Am. Rep. 398. And see note by *Redfield*, Am. Law Reg., Aug. 1873, p. 493.

¹ See this subject in general discussed in a review of Angell on Watercourses, 2 Am. Jurist, p. 25.

² In *People v. Township Board of Salem*, 21 Mich. 259, the court consider the question whether a use which is regarded as *public* for the purposes of an exercise of the right of eminent domain, is necessarily so for the purposes of taxation. They say: "Reasoning by analogy from one of the sovereign powers of government to another is exceedingly liable to deceive and mislead. An object may be *public* in one sense and for one purpose, when in a general sense and for other purposes it would be idle or misleading to apply the same term. All governmental powers exist for public purposes, but they are not necessarily to be exercised under the same conditions of public interest. The sovereign police power which the

State possesses is to be exercised only for the general public welfare, but it reaches to every person, to every kind of business, to every species of property within the Commonwealth. The conduct of every individual, and the use of all property and of all rights is regulated by it, to any extent found necessary for the preservation of the public order, and also for the protection of the private rights of one individual against encroachment by others. The sovereign power of taxation is employed in a great many cases where the power of eminent domain might be made more immediately efficient and available, if constitutional principles could suffer it to be resorted to; but each of these has its own peculiar and appropriate sphere, and the object which is *public* for the demands of the one is not necessarily of a character to permit the exercise of the other.

"If we examine the subject critically, we shall find that the most important consideration in the case of eminent domain is the necessity of accomplishing some public good which is otherwise impracticable; and we shall also find that the law does not so much regard the means as the need. The power is much nearer akin to that of the public police than to that of taxation; it goes but a step farther, and that step is in the same direc-

The Taking of Property.

Although property can only be taken for a public use, and the legislature must determine in what cases, it has been long settled

tion. Every man has an abstract right to the exclusive use of his own property for his own enjoyment in such manner as he shall choose; but if he should choose to create a nuisance upon it, or to do any thing which would preclude a reasonable enjoyment of adjacent property, the law would interfere to impose restraints. He is said to own his private lot to the centre of the earth, but he would not be allowed to excavate it indefinitely, lest his neighbor's lot should disappear in the excavation. The abstract right to make use of his own property in his own way is compelled to yield to the general comfort and protection of the community, and to a proper regard to relative rights in others. The situation of his property may even be such that he is compelled to dispose of it because the law will not suffer his regular business to be carried on upon it. A needful and lawful species of manufacture may so injuriously affect the health and comfort of the vicinity that it cannot be tolerated in a densely settled neighborhood, and therefore the owner of a lot in that neighborhood will not be allowed to engage in that manufacture upon it, even though it be his regular and legitimate business. The butcher in the vicinity of whose premises a village has grown up, finds himself compelled to remove his business elsewhere, because his right to make use of his lot as a place for the slaughter of cattle has become inconsistent with the superior right of community to the enjoyment of pure air and the accompanying blessings and comforts. The owner of a lot within the fire limits of a city may be compelled to part with the prop-

erty, because he is unable to erect a brick or stone structure upon it, and the local regulations will not permit one of wood. Eminent domain only recognizes and enforces the superior right of the community against the selfishness of individuals in a similar way. Every branch of needful industry has a right to exist, and community has a right to demand that it be permitted to exist; and if for that purpose a peculiar locality already in possession of an individual is essential, the owner's right to undisturbed occupancy must yield to the superior interest of the public. A railroad cannot go around the farm of every unwilling person, and the business of transporting persons and property for long distances by rail, which has been found so essential to the general enjoyment and welfare, could never have existed if it were in the power of any unwilling person to stop the road at his boundary, or to demand unreasonable terms as a condition of passing him. The law interferes in these cases, and regulates the relative rights of the owner and of the community with as strict regard to justice and equity as the circumstances will permit. It does not deprive the owner of his property, but it compels him to dispose of so much of it as is essential on equitable terms. While, therefore, eminent domain establishes no industry, it so regulates the relative rights of all that no individual shall have it in his power to preclude its establishment." On this general subject see *Olmstead v. Camp*, 33 Conn. 532, in which it was very fully and carefully considered.

What is a public use is a question

that it is not essential the taking should be to or by the State itself, if by any other agency, in the opinion of the legislature, the use can be made equally effectual for the public benefit. There are many cases in which the appropriation consists simply in throwing the property open to use by such persons as may see fit to avail themselves of it; as in the case of common highways and public parks. In these cases the title of the owner is not disturbed, except as it is charged with this burden; and the State defends the easement, not by virtue of any title in the property, but by means of criminal proceedings when the general right is disturbed. * But in other cases it seems impor- [* 537] tant to take the title; and in many of these it is convenient, if not necessary, that the taking be, not by the State, but by the municipality for which the use is specially designed, and to whose care and government it will be confided. When property is needed for a district school-house, it is proper that the district appropriate it; and it is strictly in accordance with the general theory as well as with the practice of our government for the State to delegate to the district the exercise of the power of eminent domain for this special purpose. So a county may be authorized to take lands for its court-house or jail; a city, for its town hall, its reservoirs of water, its sewers, and other public works of like importance. In these cases no question of power arises; the taking is by the public; the use is by the public; and the benefit to accrue therefrom is shared in greater or less degree by the whole public.

If, however, it be constitutional to appropriate lands for mill dams or mill sites, it ought also to be constitutional that the taking be by individuals instead of by the State or any of its organized political divisions; since it is no part of the business of the government to engage in manufacturing operations which come in competition with private enterprise; and the cases must be very peculiar and very rare where a State or municipal corporation could be justified in any such undertaking. } And although the practice is not entirely uniform on the subject, the general

for the courts; though where a use has been declared public by the legislature, the courts will hold it to be such unless the contrary clearly appears. *Bankhead v. Brown*, 25 Ill. 540. See *Olmstead v. Camp*, 33

Conn. 551; *Tyler v. Beacher*, 44 Vt. 648; *Loughbridge v. Harris*, 42 Geo. 500; *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Lake*, 71 Ill. 333; *Water Works Co. v. Burkhardt*, 41 Ind. 364.

sentiment is adverse to the construction of railways by the State, and the opinion is quite prevalent, if not general, that they can be better managed, controlled, and operated for the public benefit in the hands of individuals than by State or municipal officers or agencies.)

And while there are unquestionably some objections to compelling a citizen to surrender his property to a corporation, whose corporators, in receiving it, are influenced by motives of private gain and emolument, so that *to them* the purpose of the appropriation is altogether private, yet conceding it to be settled that these facilities for travel and commerce are a public necessity, if the legislature, reflecting the public sentiment, decide that the general benefit is better promoted by their construction through individuals or corporations than by the State itself, it would clearly be pressing a constitutional maxim to an absurd extreme if it were to be held that the public necessity should only be provided for in the way which is least consistent with the public [* 538] * interest. Accordingly, on the principle of public benefit, not only the State and its political divisions, but also individuals and corporate bodies, have been authorized to take private property for the construction of works of public utility, and when duly empowered by the legislature so to do, their private pecuniary interest does not preclude their being regarded as public agencies in respect to the public good which is sought to be accomplished.¹

The Necessity for the Taking.

The authority to determine in any case whether it is needful to permit the exercise of this power must rest with the State

¹ *Beekman v. Saratoga and Schenectady R. R. Co.*, 3 Paige, 73; *Wilson v. Blackbird Creek Marsh Co.*, 2 Pet. 251; *Buonaparte v. Camden and Amboy R. R. Co.*, 1 Bald. 205; *Bloodgood v. Mohawk and Hudson R. R. Co.*, 18 Wend. 1; *Lebanon v. Olcott*, 1 N. H. 339; *Petition of Mount Washington Road Co.*, 35 N. H. 141; *Pratt v. Brown*, 3 Wis. 603; *Swan v. Williams*, 2 Mich. 427; *Stevens v. Middlesex Canal*, 12 Mass. 486; *Boston Mill Dam v. Newman*,

12 Pick. 467; *Gilmer v. Lime Point*, 18 Cal. 229; *Armington v. Barnet*, 15 Vt. 750; *White River Turnpike v. Central Railroad*, 21 Vt. 590; *Raleigh, &c. R. R. Co. v. Davis*, 2 Dev. & Bat. 451; *Whiteman's Ex'r v. Wilmington, &c. R. R. Co.*, 2 Harr. 514; *Bradley v. N. Y. and N. H. R. R. Co.*, 21 Conn. 294; *Olmstead v. Camp*, 33 Conn. 532; *Eaton v. Boston, C. & M. R. R. Co.*, 51 N. H. 504.

itself; and the question is always one of strictly political character, not requiring any hearing upon the facts or any judicial determination. Nevertheless, when a work or improvement of local importance only is contemplated, the need of which must be determined upon a view of the facts which the people of the vicinity may be supposed best to understand, the question of necessity is generally referred to some local tribunal, and it may even be submitted to a jury to decide upon evidence.¹ But parties interested have no constitutional right to be heard upon the question, unless the State constitution clearly and expressly recognizes and provides for it. On general principles, the final decision rests with the legislative department of the State;² and if the question is referred to any tribunal for trial, the reference and the opportunity for being heard are matters of favor and not of right. The State is not under any obligation to make provision for a judicial contest upon that question. And where the case is such that it is proper to delegate to individuals or to a corporation the power to appropriate property, it is also competent to delegate the authority to decide upon the necessity for the taking.³

¹ *Iron R. R. Co. v. Ironton*, 19 Ohio, n. s. 299. The constitutions of some of the States require the question of the necessity of any specific appropriation to be submitted to a jury; and this requirement cannot be dispensed with. *Mansfield, &c. R. R. Co. v. Clark*, 23 Mich. 519; *Arnold v. Decatur*, 29 Mich. 77.

² *United States v. Harris*, 1 Sum. 21, 42; *Ford v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 14 Wis. 609; *People v. Smith*, 21 N. Y. 595; *Water Works Co. v. Burkhart*, 41 Ind. 364.

³ *People v. Smith*, 21 N. Y. 597; *Ford v. Chicago and N. W. R. R. Co.*, 14 Wis. 617; *Matter of Albany St.*, 11 Wend. 152; *Lyon v. Jerome*, 26 Wend. 484; *Hays v. Risher*, 32 Penn. St. 169; *North Missouri R. R. Co. v. Lackland*, 25 Mo. 515; *Same v. Gott*, 25 Mo. 540; *Bankhead v. Brown*, 25 Iowa, 540; *Contra Costa R. R. v. Moss*, 23 Cal. 323; *Matter of Fowler*, 53 N. Y. 60; *N. Y. Central, &c. R. R. Co. v. Met. Gas Co.*,

63 N. Y. 326; *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Lake*, 71 Ill. 333; *Warren v. St. Paul, &c. R. R. Co.*, 18 Minn. 384. In the case first cited, *Denio, J.*, says: "The question is, whether the State, in the exercise of the power to appropriate the property of individuals to a public use, where the duty of judging of the expediency of making the appropriation, in a class of cases, is committed to public officers, is obliged to afford to the owners of the property an opportunity to be heard before those officers when they sit for the purpose of making the determination. I do not speak now of the process for arriving at the amount of compensation to be paid to the owners, but of the determination whether, under the circumstances of a particular case, the property required for the purpose shall be taken or not; and I am of opinion that the State is not under any obligation to make provision for a judicial contest upon that question. The only part

[* 539] * *How much Property may be taken.*

The taking of property must always be limited to the necessity of the case, and consequently no more can be appropriated in any instance than the proper tribunal shall adjudge to be needed for the particular use for which the

of the constitution which refers to the subject is that which forbids private property to be taken for public use without compensation, and that which prescribes the manner in which the compensation shall be ascertained. It is not pretended that the statute under consideration violates either of those provisions. There is, therefore, no constitutional injunction on the point under consideration. The necessity for appropriating private property for the use of the public or of the government is not a judicial question. The power resides in the legislature. It may be exercised by means of a statute which shall at once designate the property to be appropriated and the purpose of the appropriation; or it may be delegated to public officers, or, as it has been repeatedly held, to private corporations established to carry on enterprises in which the public are interested. There is no restraint upon the power, except that requiring compensation to be made. And where the power is committed to public officers, it is a subject of legislative discretion to determine what prudential regulations shall be established to secure a discreet and judicious exercise of the authority. The constitutional provision securing a trial by jury in certain cases, and that which declares that no citizen shall be deprived of his property without due process of law, have no application to the case. The jury trial can only be claimed as a constitutional right where the subject is judicial in its character. The exercise of the right of eminent do-

main stands on the same ground with the power of taxation. Both are emanations from the law-making power. They are attributes of political sovereignty, for the exercise of which the legislature is under no necessity to address itself to the courts. In imposing a tax, or in appropriating the property of a citizen, or of a class of citizens, for a public purpose, with a proper provision for compensation, the legislative act is itself due process of law; though it would not be if it should undertake to appropriate the property of one citizen for the use of another, or to confiscate the property of one person or class of persons, or a particular description of property upon some view of public policy, where it could not be said to be taken for a public use. It follows from these views that it is not necessary for the legislature, in the exercise of the right of eminent domain, either directly, or indirectly through public officers or agents, to invest the proceedings with the forms or substance of judicial process. It may allow the owner to intervene and participate in the discussion before the officer or board to whom the power is given of determining whether the appropriation shall be made in a particular case, or it may provide that the officers shall act upon their own views of propriety and duty, without the aid of a forensic contest. The appropriation of the property is an act of public administration, and the form and manner of its performance is such as the legislature in its discretion shall prescribe."

appropriation is made. When a part only of a man's premises is needed by the public, the necessity for the appropriation of that part will not justify the taking of the whole, even though compensation be made therefor. The moment the appropriation goes beyond the necessity of the case, it ceases to be justified on the principles which underlie the right of eminent domain.¹ If, * however, the statute providing for such ap- [* 541] propriation is acted upon, and the property owner accepts the compensation awarded to him under it, he will be precluded by this implied assent from afterwards objecting to the excessive

¹ By a statute of New York it was enacted that whenever a part only of a lot or parcel of land should be required for the purposes of a city street, if the commissioners for assessing compensation should deem it expedient to include the whole lot in the assessment, they should have power so to do; and the part not wanted for the particular street or improvement should, upon the confirmation of the report, become vested in the corporation, and might be appropriated to public uses, or sold in case of no such appropriation. Of this statute it was said by the Supreme Court of New York: "If this provision was intended merely to give to the corporation capacity to take property under such circumstances with the consent of the owner, and then to dispose of the same, there can be no objection to it; but if it is to be taken literally, that the commissioners may, against the consent of the owner, take the whole lot, when only a part is required for public use, and the residue to be applied to private use, it assumes a power which, with all respect, the legislature did not possess. The constitution, by authorizing the appropriation of property to public use, impliedly declares that for any other use private property shall not be taken from one and applied to the private use of another. It is in violation of natural right; and if it is not in violation of the letter of

the constitution, it is of its spirit, and cannot be supported. This power has been supposed to be convenient when the greater part of a lot is taken, and only a small part left, not required for public use, and that small part of but little value in the hands of the owner. In such case the corporation has been supposed best qualified to take and dispose of such parcels, or goers, as they have sometimes been called; and probably this assumption of power has been acquiesced in by the proprietors. I know of no case where the power has been questioned, and where it has received the deliberate sanction of this court. Suppose a case where only a few feet, or even inches, are wanted, from one end of a lot to widen a street, and a valuable building stands upon the other end of such lot; would the power be conceded to exist to take the whole lot, whether the owner consented or not? The *quantity* of the residue of any lot cannot vary the principle. The owner may be very unwilling to part with only a few feet; and I hold it equally incompetent for the legislature to dispose of private property, whether feet or acres are the subject of this assumed power." *Matter of Albany St.*, 11 Wend. 151, per *Savage*, Ch. J. To the same effect is *Dunn v. City Council*, Harper, 129. And see *Paul v. Detroit*, 32 Mich. 108.

regulate the public highways, should authorize the construction of a bridge across a navigable river, it is quite possible that all proprietary interests in land upon the river might be injuriously affected; but such injury could no more give a valid claim against the State for damages, than could any change in the general laws of the State, which, while keeping in view the general good, might injuriously affect particular interests.¹ So if, by the erection of a dam in order to improve navigation, the owner of a fishery finds it diminished in value,² or if by deepening the channel of a river to improve the navigation a spring is destroyed,³ or by a change in the grade of a city street the value of adjacent lots is diminished,⁴ — in these and similar cases the law affords no redress for

¹ *Davidson v. Boston and Maine R. R. Co.*, 3 Cush. 91.

² *Shrunk v. Schuylkill Navigation Co.*, 14 S. & R. 71. In *Green v. Swift*, 47 Cal. 536, it is held that where one finds his land injured in consequence of a change in the current of a river, caused by straightening it, he cannot claim compensation as of right.

³ *Commonwealth v. Richter*, 1 Penn. St. 467. It is justly said by Mr. Justice *Miller*, in *Pumpelly v. The Green Bay, &c. Co.*, 13 Wall. 180, that the decisions "that for the consequential injury to the property of an individual from the prosecution of improvement of roads, streets, rivers, and other highways for the public good, there is no redress," "have gone to the extreme and limit of sound judicial construction in favor of this principle, and in some cases beyond it; and it remains true that where real estate is actually invaded by superinduced additions of water, earth, sand, or other material, or by having any artificial structure placed on it, so as effectually to destroy or impair its usefulness, it is a taking within the meaning of the constitution." See also *Arimond v. Green Bay, &c. Co.*, 31 Wis. 316; *Aurora v. Reed*, 57 Ill. 29; s. c. 11 Am. Rep. 1. This whole subject is most

elaborately considered by *Smith, J.*, in *Eaton v. Boston, C. & M. R. R. Co.*, 51 N. H. 504. It was decided in that case that, notwithstanding a party had received compensation for the taking of his land for a railroad, he was entitled to a further remedy at the common law for the flooding of his land in consequence of the road being cut through a ridge on the land of another; and that this flooding was a taking of his property within the meaning of the constitution. The cases to the contrary are all considered by the learned judge, who is able to adduce very forcible reasons for his conclusions. Compare *Aldrich v. Cheshire R. R. Co.*, 21 N. H. 359; *West Branch, &c. Canal Co. v. Mulliner*, 68 Penn. St. 357; *Bellinger v. N. Y. Central R. R. Co.*, 23 N. Y. 42; *Hatch v. Vt. Central R. R. Co.*, 25 Vt. 49.

⁴ *British Plate Manufacturing Co. v. Meredith*, 4 T. R. 794; *Matter of Furman Street*, 17 Wend. 649; *Radcliff's Ex'rs v. Mayor, &c. of Brooklyn*, 4 N. Y. 195; *Graves v. Otis*, 2 Hill, 466; *Wilson v. Mayor, &c. of New York*, 1 Denio, 595; *Murphy v. Chicago*, 29 Ill. 279; *Roberts v. Chicago*, 26 Ill. 249; *Charlton v. Alleghany City*, 1 Grant, 208; *La Fayette v. Bush*, 19 Ind. 326; *Macy v. Indianapolis*, 17 Ind. 267; *Vincennes v.*

the injury. So if, in consequence of the construction of a public work, an injury occurs, but the work was constructed on proper plan and without negligence, and the injury is caused by accidental and extraordinary circumstances, the injured party cannot demand compensation.¹

[* 543] * This principle is peculiarly applicable to those cases where property is appropriated under the right of eminent domain. It must frequently occur that a party will find his rights seriously affected though no property to which he has lawful claim is actually appropriated. As where a road is laid out along the line of a man's land without taking any portion of it, in consequence of which he is compelled to keep up the whole of what before was a partition fence, one-half of which his neighbor was required to support.² No property being taken in this case, the party has no relief, unless the statute shall give it. The loss is *damnum absque injuria*. So a turnpike company, whose profits will be diminished by the construction of a railroad along the same general line of travel, is not entitled to compensation.³ So

Richards, 23 Ind. 381; Green v. Reading, 9 Watts, 382; O'Conner v. Pittsburgh, 18 Penn. St. 187; *In re Ridge Street*, 29 Penn. St. 391; Callendar v. Marsh, 1 Pick. 417; Creal v. Keokuk, 4 Greene (Iowa), 47; Smith v. Washington, 20 How. 135; Skinner v. Hartford Bridge Co., 29 Conn. 523; Benden v. Nashua, 17 N. H. 477; Pontiac v. Carter, 32 Mich. 164; Goszler v. Georgetown, 6 Wheat. 703. The cases of McComb v. Akron, 15 Ohio, 474, and 18 Ohio, 229, and Crawford v. Delaware, 7 Ohio, n. s. 459, are *contra*. Those cases, however, admit that a party whose interests are injured by the original establishment of a street grade can have no claim to compensation; but they hold that when the grade is once established, and lots are improved in reference to it, the corporation has no right to change the grade afterwards, except on payment of the damages.

¹ As in Sprague v. Worcester, 13 Gray, 193, where, in consequence of the erection of a bridge over a stream

on which a mill was situated, the mill was injured by an extraordinary rise in the stream; the bridge, however, being in all respects properly constructed. And see Brown v. Cayuga, &c. R. R. Co., 12 N. Y. 486, where bridge proprietors were held liable for similar injuries on the ground of negligence. And compare Norris v. Vt. Central R. R. Co., 28 Vt. 102, with Mellen v. Western R. R. Corp., 4 Gray, 301. And see note 3 on preceding page.

² Kennett's Petition, 4 Fost. 139. See Eddings v. Seabrook, 12 Rich. Law, 504; Slatter v. Des Moines Valley R. R. Co., 29 Iowa, 154; Hoag v. Switzer, 61 Ill. 294.

³ Troy and Boston R. R. Co. v. Northern Turnpike Co., 16 Barb. 100. See La Fayette Plank Road Co. v. New Albany and Salem R. R. Co., 13 Ind. 90; Richmond, &c. Co. v. Rogers, 1 Duvall, 135. So an increased competition with a party's business caused by the construction or extension of a road is not a ground

where a railroad company, in constructing their road in a proper manner on their own land, raised a high embankment near to and in front of the plaintiff's house, so as to prevent his passing to and from the same with the same convenience as before, this consequential injury was held to give no claim to compensation.¹ So the owner of dams erected by legislative authority is without remedy, if they are afterwards rendered valueless by the construction of a canal.² * And in New York it has been [* 544]

of claim. *Harvey v. Lackawanna, &c. R. R. Co.*, 47 Penn. St. 428. "Every great public improvement must, almost of necessity, more or less, affect individual convenience and property; and when the injury sustained is remote and consequential, it is *damnum absque injuria*, and is to be borne as a part of the price to be paid for the advantages of the social condition. This is founded upon the principle that the general good is to prevail over partial individual convenience." *Lansing v. Smith*, 8 Cow. 149.

¹ *Richardson v. Vermont Central R. R. Co.*, 25 Vt. 465. But *quære* if this could be so, if the effect were to prevent access from the lot to the highway. In certain Indiana cases it is said that the right of the owner of adjoining land to the use of the highway is as much property as the land itself; that it is appurtenant to the land, and is protected by the constitution. *Haynes v. Thomas*, 7 Ind. 38; *Protzman v. Indianapolis, &c. R. R. Co.*, 9 Ind. 469; *New Albany and Salem R. R. Co. v. O'Dailey*, 13 Ind. 463. The same doctrine is recognized in *Crawford v. Delaware*, 7 Ohio, n. s. 459, and *Street Railway v. Cummins ville*, 14 Ohio, n. s. 523. See also *Indianapolis R. R. Co. v. Smith*, 52 Ind. 428; *Pekin v. Brerton*, 67 Ill. 477; *Pekin v. Winkel*, 77 Ill. 56; *Grand Rapids, &c. R. R. Co. v. Heisel*, 37 Mich. In the Vermont case above cited it was held that an excavation by the company on their own land, so near the line of

the plaintiff's that his land, without any artificial weight thereon, slid into the excavation, would render the company liable for the injury; the plaintiff being entitled to the lateral support for his land.

² *Susquehanna Canal Co. v. Wright*, 9 W. & S. 9; *Monongahela Navigation Co. v. Coons*, 6 W. & S. 101. In any case, if parties exercising the right of eminent domain shall cause injury to others by a negligent or improper construction of their work, they may be liable in damages. *Rowe v. Granite Bridge Corporation*, 21 Pick. 348; *Sprague v. Worcester*, 13 Gray, 193. And if a public work is of a character to necessarily disturb the occupation and enjoyment of his estate by one whose land is not taken, he may have an action on the case for the injury, notwithstanding the statute makes no provision for compensation. As where the necessary, and not simply the accidental, consequence was, to flood a man's premises with water, thereby greatly diminishing their value. *Hooker v. New Haven and Northampton Co.*, 14 Conn. 146; s. c. 15 Conn. 312; *Evansville, &c. R. R. Co. v. Dick*, 9 Ind. 433; *Robinson v. N. Y. and Erie R. R. Co.*, 27 Barb. 512; *Trustees of Wabash and Erie Canal v. Spears*, 16 Ind. 441; *Eaton v. Boston, C. & M. R. R. Co.*, 51 N. H. 504. So where, by blasting rock in making an excavation, the fragments are thrown upon adjacent buildings so as to render

an adjoining street, whether he is owner of the land over which the *street is laid out or not.¹ So with the right [* 545] of pasturage in streets, which belongs to the owners of the soil.² So a partial destruction or diminution of value of property by an act of the government which directly and not merely incidentally affects it, is to that extent an appropriation.³

It sometimes becomes important, where a highway has been laid out and opened, to establish a different and higher grade of way upon the same line, with a view to accommodate an increased public demand. The State may be willing to surrender the control of the streets in these cases, and authorize turnpike, plank-road, or railroad corporations to occupy them for their purposes; and if it shall give such consent, the control, so far as is necessary to the purposes of the turnpike, plank-road, or railway, is thereby passed over to the corporation, and their structure in what was before a common highway cannot be regarded as a public nuisance.⁴ But the municipal organizations in the State have no power to give such consent without express legislative permission; the general control of their streets which is commonly given by municipal charters not being sufficient authority

¹ *Lackland v. North Missouri R. R. Co.*, 31 Mo. 180. See *supra*, p. *543, note.

² *Tonawanda R. R. Co. v. Munger*, 5 Denio, 255; *Woodruff v. Neal*, 28 Conn. 165. In the first case it was held that a by-law of a town giving liberty to the inhabitants to depasture their cows in the public highways under certain regulations, passed under the authority of a general statute empowering towns to pass such by-laws, was of no validity, because it appropriated the pasturage, which was private property, to the public use, without making compensation. The contrary has been held in New York as to all highways laid out while such a statute was in existence; the owner being held to be compensated for the pasturage as well as for the use of the land for other purposes, at the time the highway was laid out. *Griffin v. Martin*, 7 Barb. 297; *Hardenburgh v. Lockwood*, 25 Barb. 9. See also Ker-

whacker v. Cleveland, C. and C. R. R. Co., 3 Ohio, n. s. 177, where it was held that by ancient custom in that State there was a right of pasturage by the public in the highways.

³ See *Glover v. Powell*, 2 Stockt. 211; *Eaton v. Boston, C. & M. R. R. Co.*, 51 N. H. 504. Even a temporary right to the possession of lands cannot be given by the legislature without provision for compensation. *San Mateo Water Works v. Sharpstein*, 50 Cal. 284. A provision in the charter of a corporation that it shall not be liable for diverting water is void. *Harding v. Stamford Water Co.*, 41 Conn. 87.

⁴ See *Commonwealth v. Erie and N. E. R. R. Co.*, 27 Penn. St. 339; *Tennessee, &c. R. R. Co. v. Adams*, 3 Head, 596; *New Orleans, &c. R. R. Co. v. New Orleans*, 26 La. Ann. 517; *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Joliet*, 79 Ill. 25; *Donnaher's Case*, 16 Miss. 679.

property along its line ; and though the adjoining proprietors are required to pay toll, they are supposed to be, and generally are, fully compensated for this burden by the increased excellence of the road, and by their exemption from highway labor upon it.¹ But it is different when a highway is appropriated for the purposes of a railroad. "It is quite apparent that the use by the public of a highway, and the use thereof by a * railroad [* 547] company, is essentially different. In the one case every person is at liberty to travel over the highway in any place or part thereof, but he has no exclusive right of occupation of any part thereof except while he is temporarily passing over it. It would be trespass for him to occupy any part of the highway exclusively for any longer period of time than was necessary for that purpose, and the stoppages incident thereto. But a railroad company takes exclusive and permanent possession of a portion of the street or highway. It lays down its rails upon, or imbeds them in, the soil, and thus appropriates a portion of the street to its exclusive use, and for its own particular mode of conveyance. In the one case, all persons may travel on the street or highway in their own common modes of conveyance. In the other, no one can travel on or over the rails laid down, except the railroad company and with their cars specially adapted to the tracks. In one case the use is general and open alike to all. In the other, it is peculiar and exclusive.

"It is true that the actual use of the street by the railroad may not be so absolute and constant as to exclude the public also from its use. With a single track, and particularly if the cars used upon it were propelled by horse-power, the interruption of the public easement in the street might be very trifling and of no practical consequence to the public at large. But this consideration cannot affect the question of the right of property, or of the increase of the burden upon the soil. It would present simply a question of degree in respect to the enlargement of the easement,

¹ See *Commonwealth v. Wilkin-*
son, 16 Pick. 175; *Benedict v. Goit*,
3 Barb. 459; *Wright v. Carter*, 27
N. J. 76; *State v. Laverack*, 34
N. J. 201; *Chagrin Falls and Cleve-*
land Plank-Road Co. v. Cane, 2 Ohio,
N. S. 419; *Douglass v. Turnpike Co.*,
22 Md. 219. But see *Williams v.*

Natural Bridge Plank Road Co., 21
Mo. 580. In *Murray v. County Com-*
missioners of Berkshire, 12 Met. 455,
it was held that owners of lands ad-
joining a turnpike were not entitled
to compensation when a turnpike was
changed to a common highway.

use which may possibly have an injurious effect not contemplated in the original appropriation can be considered any thing else than the imposition of a new burden upon the owner's estate. In Connecticut, where the authority of the legislature to authorize a railroad to be constructed in a common highway without compensation to land-owners is also denied, importance is attached to the terms of the statute under which the original appropriation was made, and which are regarded as permitting the taking for the purposes of a common highway, and for no other. The reasoning of the court appears to us sound; and it is applicable to the statutes of the States generally.¹

¹ *Imlay v. Union Branch R. R. Co.*, 26 Conn. 255. "When land is condemned for a special purpose," say the court, "on the score of public utility, the sequestration is limited to that particular use. Land taken for a highway is not thereby converted into a common. As the property is not taken, but the use only, the right of the public is limited to the use, the specific use, for which the proprietor has been divested of a complete dominion over his own estate. These are propositions which are no longer open to discussion. But it is contended that land once taken and still held for highway purposes may be used for a railway without exceeding the limits of the easement already acquired by the public. If this is true, if the new use of the land is within the scope of the original sequestration or dedication, it would follow that the railway privileges are not an encroachment on the estate remaining in the owner of the soil, and that the new mode of enjoying the public easement will not enable him rightfully to assert a claim to damages therefor. On the contrary, if the true intent and efficacy of the original condemnation was not to subject the land to such a burden as will be imposed upon it when it is confiscated to the uses and control of a railroad corporation, it cannot be denied that in such a case the estate

of the owner of the soil is injuriously affected by the supervening servitude; that his rights are abridged, and that in a legal sense his land is again taken for public uses. Thus it appears that the court have simply to decide whether there is such an identity between a highway and a railway, that statutes conferring a right to establish the former include an authority to construct the latter.

"The term 'public highway,' as employed in such of our statutes as convey the right of eminent domain, has certainly a limited import. Although, as suggested at the bar, a navigable river or a canal is, in some sense, a public highway, yet an easement assumed under the name of a highway would not enable the public to convert a street into a canal. The highway, in the true meaning of the word, would be destroyed. But as no such destruction of the highway is necessarily involved in the location of a railroad track upon it, we are pressed to establish the legal proposition that a highway, such as is referred to in these statutes, means or at least comprehends a railroad. Such a construction is possible only when it is made to appear that there is a substantial practical or technical identity between the uses of land for highway and for railway purposes.

"No one can fail to see that the terms 'railway' and 'highway' are

ture to appropriate a * common highway to the purposes [* 550] of a railroad, unless at the same time provision is made for compensation to the owners of the fee. *. These [* 551] cases, however, have had reference to the common railroad operated by steam. In one of the New York cases¹ it is intimated, and in another case in the same State it was directly decided, that the ruling should be the same in the case of the street railway operated by horse-power.² There is generally, however, a very great difference in the two cases, and some of the considerations to which the courts have attached importance could have no application in many cases of common horse railways. A horse railway, as a general thing, will interfere very little with the ordinary use of the way by the public, even upon the very line of the road; and in many cases it would be a relief to an overburdened way, rather than an impediment to the previous use. In Connecticut, after it had been decided, as above shown, that the owner of the fee subject to a perpetual highway was entitled to compensation when the highway was appropriated for an ordinary railroad, it was also held that the authority to lay

highway is authorized by law, it is idle to pretend that any proprietor is divested of such a right. It would seem that, under such circumstances, the true construction of highway laws could hardly be debatable, and that the absence of legal identity between the two uses of which we speak was patent and entire.

“ Again, no argument or illustration can strengthen the self-evident proposition that, when a railway is authorized over a public highway, a right is created against the proprietor of the fee, in favor of a person, an artificial person, to whom he before bore no legal relation whatever. It is understood that when such an easement is sought or bestowed, a new and independent right will accrue to the railroad corporation as against the owner of the soil, and that, without any reference to the existence of the highway, his land will for ever stand charged with the accruing servitude. Accordingly, if such a high-

way were to be discontinued according to the legal forms prescribed for that purpose, the railroad corporation would still insist upon the express and independent grant of an easement to itself, enabling it to maintain its own road on the site of the abandoned roadway. We are of opinion, therefore, as was distinctly intimated by this court in a former case (see opinion of *Hinman, J.*, in *Nicholson v. N. Y. and N. H. R. R. Co.*, 22 Conn. 85), that to subject the owner of the soil of a highway to a further appropriation of his land to railway uses is the imposition of a new servitude upon his estate, and is an act demanding the compensation which the law awards when land is taken for public purposes.” And see *South Carolina R. R. Co. v. Steiner*, 44 Geo. 546.

¹ *Wager v. Troy Union R. R. Co.*, 25 N. Y. 532.

² *Craig v. Rochester City and Brighton R. R. Co.*, 39 Barb. 449.

the Connecticut case,¹ the compensation is always liable either to exceed or to fall below the value of the land taken, in consequence of incidental injuries or benefits to the owner as proprietor of the land which remains. These injuries or benefits will be estimated with reference to the identical use to which the property is appropriated; and if it is afterwards put to another use, which causes greater incidental injury, and the owner is not allowed further compensation, it is very evident that he has suffered by the change a wrong which could not have been foreseen and provided against. And if, on the other hand, he is entitled in any case to an assessment of damages in consequence of such an appropriation of the street affecting his rights injuriously, then he must be entitled to such an assessment in every case, and the question involved will be, not as to the right, but only of the *quantum* of damages. The horse railway either is or is not the imposition of a new burden upon the estate. If it is not, the owner of the fee is entitled to compensation in no case; if it is, he is entitled to have an assessment of damages in every case.

In New York, where, by law, when a public street is laid out or dedicated, the fee in the soil becomes vested in the city, it has been held that the legislature might authorize the construction of a horse railway in a street, and that neither the city nor the owners of lots were entitled to compensation, notwithstanding it was * found as a fact that the lot owners [* 553] would suffer injury from the construction of the road. The city was not entitled, because, though it held the fee, it held it in trust for the use of all the people of the State, and not as corporate or municipal property; and the land having been originally acquired under the right of eminent domain, and the trust being *publici juris*, it was under the unqualified control of the legislature, and any appropriation of it to public use by legislative authority could not be regarded as an appropriation of the private property of the city. And so far as the adjacent lot owners were concerned, their interest in the streets, distinct from that of other citizens, was only as having a possibility of reverter after the public use of the land should cease; and the value of this, if any thing, was inappreciable, and could not entitle them to compensation.²

¹ *Imlay v. Union Branch R. R. Co.*, 26 Conn. 257.

² *People v. Kerr*, 37 Barb. 357; s. c. 27 N. Y. 188. The same ruling

* It is not easy, as is very evident, to trace a clear line [* 554] of authority running through the various decisions bear-

this permission to locate the track in Beach Street, the common council acted under an express power granted by the legislature. So that the defendant has all the right which both the legislature and the common council could give it, to occupy the street with its track. But the complainant assumes higher ground, and claims that any use of the street, even under the authority of the legislature and the common council, which tends to deteriorate the value of his property on the street, is a violation of that fundamental law which forbids private property to be taken for public use without just compensation. This is manifestly an erroneous view of the constitutional guaranty thus invoked. It must necessarily happen that streets will be used for various legitimate purposes, which will, to a greater or less extent, incommode persons residing or doing business upon them, and just to that extent damage their property; and yet such damage is incident to all city property, and for it a party can claim no remedy. The common council may appoint certain localities where hacks and drays shall stand waiting for employment, or where wagons loaded with hay or wood, or other commodities, shall stand waiting for purchasers. This may drive customers away from shops or stores in the vicinity, and yet there is no remedy for the damage. A street is made for the passage of persons and property; and the law cannot define what exclusive means of transportation and passage shall be used. Universal experience shows that this can best be left to the determination of the municipal authorities, who are supposed to be best acquainted with the wants and necessities of the citizens generally. To say that a new mode of passage shall be ban-

ished from the streets, no matter how much the general good may require it, simply because streets were not so used in the days of Blackstone, would hardly comport with the advancement and enlightenment of the present age. Steam has but lately taken the place, to any extent, of animal power for land transportation, and for that reason alone shall it be expelled the streets? For the same reason camels must be kept out, though they might be profitably employed. Some fancy horse or timid lady might be frightened by such uncouth objects. Or is the objection not in the motive-power, but because the carriages are larger than were formerly used, and run upon iron, and are confined to a given track in the street? Then street railroads must not be admitted; they have large carriages which run on iron rails, and are confined to a given track. Their momentum is great, and may do damage to ordinary vehicles or foot passengers. Indeed we may suppose or assume that streets occupied by them are not so pleasant for other carriages or so desirable for residences or business stands, as if not thus occupied. But for this reason the property owners along the street cannot expect to stop such improvements. The convenience of those who live at a greater distance from the centre of a city requires the use of such improvements, and for their benefit the owners of property upon the street must submit to the burden, when the common council determine that the public good requires it. Cars upon street railroads are now generally, if not universally, propelled by horses, but who can say how long it will be before it will be found safe and profitable to propel them with steam, or some other power besides horses?

was or was not in the public, or, on the other hand, have proceeded on the theory that a railway was only in furtherance of the original purpose of the appropriation, and not * to be regarded as the imposition of any new burden, [* 556] even where an easement only was originally taken.¹

Perhaps the true distinction in these cases is not to be found in the motive-power of the railway, or in the question whether the fee-simple or a mere easement was taken in the original appropriation, but depends upon the question whether the railway constitutes a thoroughfare, or, on the other hand, is a mere local convenience.

¹ There is great difficulty, as it seems to us, in supporting important distinctions upon the fact that the fee was originally taken for the use of the public instead of a mere easement. If the fee is appropriated or dedicated, it is for a particular use only; and it is a *conditional* fee, — a fee on condition that the land continue to be occupied for that use. The practical difference in the cases is, that when the fee is taken, the possession of the original owner is excluded; and in the case of city streets where there is occasion to devote them to many other purposes besides those of passage, but nevertheless not inconsistent, such as for the laying of water and gas pipes, and the construction of sewers, this exclusion of any private right of occupation is important, and will sometimes save controversies and litigation. But to say that when a man has declared a dedication for a particular use, under a statute which makes a dedication the gift of a fee, he thereby makes it liable to be appropriated to other purposes, when the same could not be done if a perpetual easement had been dedicated, seems to be basing important distinctions upon a difference which after all is more technical than real, and which in any view does not affect the distinction made. The same reasoning which has sustained the legislature in authorizing a railroad track to be laid

down in a city street would support its action in authorizing it to be made into a canal; and the purpose of the original dedication or appropriation would thereby be entirely defeated. Is it not more consistent with established rules to hold that a dedication or appropriation to one purpose confines the use to that purpose; and when it is taken for any other, the original owner has not been compensated for the injury he may sustain in consequence, and is therefore entitled to it now? Notwithstanding a dedication which vests the title in the public, it must be conceded that the interest of the adjacent lot owners is still property. “They have a peculiar interest in the street, which neither the local nor the general public can pretend to claim; a private right of the nature of an incorporeal hereditament, legally attached to their contiguous grounds and the erections thereon; an incidental title to certain facilities and franchises assured to them by contracts and by law, and without which their property would be comparatively of little value. This easement, appurtenant to the lots, unlike any right of one lot owner in the lot of another, is as much property as the lot itself.” *Crawford v. Delaware*, 7 Ohio, N. S. 459. See some very pertinent and sensible remarks on the same subject by *Ranney, J.*, in *Street Railway v. Cummins-ville*, 14 Ohio, N. S. 541.

any case, to authorize lands already taken for one public use to be appropriated to another, there must be distinct and express legislative authority.¹

principle, stand precisely opposite. I have said that a market is an obstruction to a street, that it is not a use of it as a street, but, if unauthorized, is a nuisance. To the contrary of this, a horse railroad is a new mode of using a street as such, and it is precisely upon this ground that it has been held to be legal. The cases rest upon this foundation. That a horse railway was a legitimate use of a highway was decided in *Hinchman v. Paterson Horse Railroad Co.*, 2 C. E. Greene, 76; and, in his opinion, Chancellor *Greene* assigns the following as the reasons of his judgment: 'The use of the road is nearly identical with that of the ordinary highway. The motive-power is the same. The noise and jarring of the street by the cars is not greater, and ordinarily less than that produced by omnibuses and other vehicles in ordinary use. Admit that the nature of the use, as respects the travelling public, is somewhat variant, how does it prejudice the land-owner? Is his property taken? Are his rights as a land-owner affected? Does it interfere with the use of his property any more than the ordinary highway?' It is clear that this reasoning can have no appropriate application to a case in which it appears that the use of the street is so far from being nearly identical with that of the ordinary highway that in law it has always been regarded as an injury to

such public easement, and on that account an indictable offence.

"I regard, then, a right to hold a market in a street as an easement additional to, and in a measure inconsistent with, its ordinary use as a highway. The question therefore is presented, Can such easement be conferred by the legislature on the public without compensation to the land-owner? I have already said that from the first it has appeared to me this question must be answered in the negative. I think the true rule is, that land taken by the public for a particular use cannot be applied under such a sequestration to any other use to the detriment of the land-owner. This is the only rule which will adequately protect the constitutional right of the citizen. To permit land taken for one purpose, and for which the land-owner has been compensated, to be applied to another and additional purpose, for which he has received no compensation, would be a mere evasion of the spirit of the fundamental law of the State. Land taken and applied for the ordinary purpose of a street would often be an improvement of the adjacent property; an appropriation of it to the uses of a market would, perhaps, as often be destructive of one-half the value of such property. Compensation for land, therefore, to be used as a highway, might, and many times would be, totally inade-

¹ *In re Boston, &c. R. R. Co.*, 53 N. Y. 574; *State v. Montclair R. Co.*, 35 N. J. 328; *Railroad Co. v. Dayton*, 23 Ohio, N. S. 510. When for a way land already used for that purpose is taken, every thing upon it is also taken; such as flag-stones, bridges,

culverts, &c.; and the assessment of damages should cover the whole, *Ford v. County Commissioners*, 64 Me. 408; also, any buildings which it may be necessary to destroy, *Lafayette, &c. R. R. Co. v. Winslow*, 66 Ill. 219.

mechanical power, or for any of the other purposes for which they can make it available, without depriving those below them of the like use, or encroaching upon the rights of those above; and this property is equally protected with any of a more tangible character.¹

What Interest in Land can be taken under the Right of Eminent Domain.

Where land is appropriated to the public use under the right of eminent domain, and against the will of the owner, we have seen how careful the law is to limit the public authorities to their precise needs, and not to allow the dispossession of the owner from any portion of his freehold which the public use does not require. This must be so on the general principle that the right being based on necessity, cannot be any broader than the necessity which supports it. For the same reason, it would seem that, in respect to the land actually taken, if there can be any conjoint occupation of the owner and the public, the former should not be altogether excluded, but should be allowed to occupy for his private purposes to any extent not inconsistent with the public use. As a general rule, the laws for the exercise of the right of eminent domain do not assume to go further than to appropriate the use, and the title *in fee still remains in [* 558] the original owner. In the common highways, the public have a perpetual easement, but the soil is the property of the adjacent owner, and he may make any use of it which does not interfere with the public right of passage, and the public can use it only for the purposes usual with such ways.² And when the land ceases to be used by the public as a way, the owner will again become restored to his complete and exclusive possession, and the fee will cease to be encumbered with the easement.³

¹ *Morgan v. King*, 18 Barb. 284; s. c. 35 N. Y. 454; *Gardner v. Newburg*, 2 Johns. Ch. 162.

² In *Adams v. Rivers*, 11 Barb. 390, a person who stood in the public way and abused the occupant of an adjoining lot was held liable in trespass as being unlawfully there, because not using the highway for the purpose to which it was appropriated.

³ *Dean v. Sullivan R. R. Co.*, 2 Fost. 321; *Blake v. Rich*, 34 N. H. 282; *Henry v. Dubuque and Pacific R. R. Co.*, 2 Iowa, 288; *Weston v. Foster*, 7 Met. 299; *Quimby v. Vermont Central R. R. Co.*, 23 Vt. 387; *Giesy v. Cincinnati, &c. R. R. Co.*, 4 Ohio, N. S. 327. See *ante*, p. *553, note.

does not seem to be uncommon to provide that, in the case of some classes of public ways, and especially of city and village streets, the dedication or appropriation to the public use shall vest the title to the land in the State, county, or city; the purposes for which the land may be required by the public being so numerous and varied, and so impossible of complete specification in advance, that nothing short of a complete ownership in the public is deemed sufficient to provide for them. In any case, however, an easement only would be taken, unless the statute plainly contemplated and provided for the appropriation of a larger interest.¹

Compensation for Property taken.

It is a primary requisite, in the appropriation of lands for public purposes, that compensation shall be made therefor. Eminent domain differs from taxation in that, in the former case, the citizen is compelled to surrender to the public something beyond his due proportion for the public benefit. The public seize and appropriate his particular estate, because of a special need for it, and not because it is right, as between him and the government, that he should surrender it.² To him, therefore, the benefit and protection he receives from the government are not sufficient compensation; for those benefits are the equivalent for the taxes he pays, and the other public burdens he assumes in common with the community at large. And this compensation must be pecuniary in its character, because it is in the nature of a payment for a compulsory purchase.³

Park Com'rs v. Armstrong, 45 N. Y. 234; s. c. 6 Am. Rep. 70; *Water Works Co. v. Burkhart*, 41 Ind. 364. Compare *Gebhardt v. Reeves*, 75 Ill. 301.

¹ *Barclay v. Howell's Lessee*, 6 Pet. 498; *Rust v. Lowe*, 6 Mass. 90; *Jackson v. Rutland and B. R. R. Co.*, 25 Vt. 151; *Jackson v. Hathaway*, 15 Johns. 447.

² *People v. Mayor, &c. of Brooklyn*, 4 N. Y. 419; *Woodbridge v. Detroit*, 8 Mich. 278; *Booth v. Woodbury*, 32 Conn. 130.

³ The effect of the right of eminent domain against the individual

“amounts to nothing more than a power to oblige him to sell and convey when the public necessities require it.” *Johnson, J.*, in *Fletcher v. Peck*, 6 Cranch, 145. And see *Bradshaw v. Rogers*, 20 Johns. 103, per *Spencer, Ch. J.*; *People v. Mayor, &c. of Brooklyn*, 4 N. Y. 419; *Carson v. Coleman*, 3 Stockt. 106; *Young v. Harrison*, 6 Geo. 131; *United States v. Minnesota, &c. R. R. Co.*, 1 Minn. 127; *Railroad Co. v. Ferris*, 26 Tex. 603; *Curran v. Shattuck*, 24 Cal. 427; *State v. Graves*, 19 Md. 351; *Weckler v. Chicago*, 61 Ill. 142, 147.

the State * has provided a remedy by resort to which the [* 561] party can have his compensation assessed, adequate means are afforded for its satisfaction ; since the property of the municipality, or of the State, is a fund to which he can resort without risk of loss.¹ It is essential, however, that the remedy be one to which the party can resort on his own motion ; if the provision be such that only the public authorities appropriating the land are authorized to take proceedings for the assessment, it must be held to be void.² But if the remedy is adequate, and the party is allowed to pursue it, it is not unconstitutional to limit the period in which he shall resort to it, and to provide that, unless he shall take proceedings for the assessment of damages within a specified

Lowerce v. Newark, 38 N. J. 151; *Brock v. Hishen*, 40 Wis. 674; *Long v. Fuller*, 68 Penn. St. 170 (case of a school district). " Although it may not be necessary, within the constitutional provision, that the amount of compensation should be actually ascertained and paid before property is thus taken, it is, I apprehend, the settled doctrine, even as against the State itself, that at least certain and adequate provision must first be made by law (except in cases of public emergency), so that the owner can coerce payment through the judicial tribunals or otherwise, without any unreasonable or unnecessary delay; otherwise the law making the appropriation is no better than blank paper. *Bloodgood v. Mohawk and Hudson R. R. Co.*, 18 Wend. 9. The provisions of the statute prescribing the mode of compensation in cases like the present, when properly understood and administered, come fully up to this great fundamental principle; and even if any doubt could be entertained about the true construction, it should be made to lean in favor of the one that is found to be most in conformity with the constitutional requisite." *People v. Hayden*, 6 Hill, 359. " A provision for compensation is an indispensable attend-

ant upon the due and constitutional exercise of the power of depriving an individual of his property." *Gardner v. Newburg*, 2 Johns. Ch. 168; *Buffalo, &c. R. R. Co. v. Ferris*, 26 Tex. 588; *Ash v. Cummings*, 50 N. H. 591, 613; *Haverhill Bridge Proprietors v. County Com'rs*, 103 Mass. 120; s. c. 4 Am. Rep. 518; *Langford v. Com'rs of Ramsay Co.*, 16 Minn. 380; *Southwestern R. R. Co. v. Telegraph Co.*, 46 Geo. 43.

¹ In *Commissioners, &c. v. Bowie*, 34 Ala. 461, it was held that a provision by law that compensation when assessed should be paid to the owner by the county treasurer sufficiently secured its payment. And see *Talbot v. Hudson*, 16 Gray, 417; *Chapman v. Gates*, 54 N. Y. 132.

² *Shepardson v. Milwaukee and Beloit R. R. Co.*, 6 Wis. 605; *Powers v. Bears*, 12 Wis. 220. See *McCann v. Sierra Co.*, 7 Cal. 121; *Colton v. Rossi*, 9 Cal. 595; *Ragatz v. Dubuque*, 4 Iowa, 343. But in *People v. Hayden*, 6 Hill, 359, where the statute provided for appraisers who were to proceed to appraise the land as soon as it was appropriated, the proper remedy of the owner, if they failed to perform this duty, was held to be to apply for a *mandamus*.

principles, it is essential that an adequate fund be provided from which the owner of the property can certainly obtain compensation; it is not competent to deprive him of his property, and turn him over to an action at law against a corporation which may or may not prove responsible, * and to a judgment of [* 563] uncertain efficacy.¹ For the consequence would be, in some cases, that the party might lose his estate without redress, in violation of the inflexible maxim upon which the right is based.

What the tribunal shall be which is to assess the compensation must be determined either by the constitution or by the statute which provides for the appropriation. The case is not one where, as a matter of right, the party is entitled to a trial by jury, unless the constitution has provided that tribunal for the purpose.² Nevertheless, the proceeding is judicial in its character, and the party in interest is entitled to have an impartial tribunal, and the usual rights and privileges which attend judicial investigations.³ It is not competent for the State itself to fix the compensation

Colorado, art. 1, § 15; Constitution of Georgia, art. 1, § 17; Constitution of Iowa, art. 1, § 18; Constitution of Kansas, art. 12, § 4; Constitution of Kentucky, art. 13, § 14; Constitution of Maryland, art. 1, § 40; Constitution of Minnesota, art. 1, § 13; Constitution of Mississippi, art. 1, § 13; Constitution of Missouri, art. 2, § 21; Constitution of Nevada, art. 1, § 8; Constitution of Ohio, art. 1, § 19; Constitution of Pennsylvania, art. 1, § 10. The Constitution of Indiana, art. 1, § 21, and that of Oregon, art. 1, § 19, require compensation to be first made, except when the property is appropriated by the State. The Constitution of Alabama, art. 1, § 24, and of South Carolina, art. 1, § 23, are in legal effect not very different. A construction requiring payment before appropriation is given to the Constitution of Illinois. *Cook v. South Park Com'rs*, 61 Ill. 120, and cases cited. In assessing compensation, the Constitutions of Ohio and Iowa do not allow benefits from the contemplated work to be taken into

account; and the same is true in Kansas, where the appropriation is by a corporation for right of way.

¹ *Shepardson v. Milwaukee and Beloit R. R. Co.*, 6 Wis. 605; *Walthers v. Warner*, 25 Mo. 277; *Gilmer v. Lime Point*, 18 Cal. 229; *Curran v. Shattuck*, 24 Cal. 427; *Memphis and Charleston R. R. Co. v. Payne*, 37 Miss. 700; *Henry v. Dubuque and Pacific R. R. Co.*, 10 Iowa, 540; *Ash v. Cummings*, 50 N. H. 591; *Carr v. Georgia R. R. Co.*, 1 Kelly, 532; *Southwestern R. R. Co. v. Telegraph Co.*, 46 Geo. 43.

² *Petition of Mount Washington Co.*, 35 N. H. 134; *Ligat v. Commonwealth*, 19 Penn. St. 456, 460; *Rich v. Chicago*, 59 Ill. 286; *Ames v. Lake Superior, &c. R. R. Co.*, 21 Minn. 241.

³ *Rich v. Chicago*, 59 Ill. 293-295; *Cook v. South Park Com'rs*, 61 Ill. 115; *Ames v. Lake Superior, &c. R. R. Co.*, 21 Minn. 241. Whatever notices, &c., the law requires, must be given. *People v. Kniskern*, 54 N. Y. 52; *Powers's Appeal*, 29 Mich. 504.

railway line is located across his land, and the damages are appraised, his right to payment is complete, and he cannot be required to wait until the railway company shall actually occupy his premises, or enter upon the construction of the road at that point. It is not to be forgotten, however, that the proceedings for the assessment and collection of damages are statutory, and displace the usual remedies; that the public agents who keep within the statute are not liable to common-law action;¹ that it is only where they fail to follow the statute that they render themselves liable as trespassers;² though if they construct their work in a careless, negligent, and improper manner, by means of which carelessness, negligence, or improper construction a party is injured in his rights, he may have an action at the common law as in other cases of injurious negligence.³

* The principle upon which the damages are to be [* 565] assessed is always an important consideration in these cases; and the circumstances of different appropriations are sometimes so peculiar that it has been found somewhat difficult to establish a rule that shall always be just and equitable. If the whole of a man's estate is taken, there can generally be little difficulty in fixing upon the measure of compensation; for it is apparent that, in such a case, he ought to have the whole market value of his premises, and he cannot reasonably demand more. The question is reduced to one of market value, to be determined upon the testimony of those who have knowledge upon that subject, or whose business or experience entitles their opinions to weight. It may be that, in such a case, the market value may not seem to the owner an adequate compensation; for he may have reasons peculiar to himself, springing from association, or

Unity, 18 N. H. 77. And where a city thus appropriates land for a street, it would not be allowed to set up in defence to a demand for compensation its own irregularities in the proceedings taken to condemn the land. *Higgins v. Chicago*, 18 Ill. 276; *Chicago v. Wheeler*, 25 Ill. 478.

¹ *East and West India Dock, &c. Co. v. Gattke*, 15 Jur. 61; *Kimble v. White Water Valley Canal*, 1 Ind. 285; *Mason v. Kennebec, &c. R. R. Co.*, 31 Me. 215; *Aldrich v. Cheshire*

R. R. Co., 1 Fost. 359; *Brown v. Beatty*, 34 Miss. 227; *Pettibone v. La Crosse and Milwaukee R. R. Co.*, 14 Wis. 443; *Vilas v. Milwaukee and Mississippi R. R. Co.*, 15 Wis. 233.

² *Dean v. Sullivan R. R. Co.*, 2 Fost. 316; *Furniss v. Hudson River R. R. Co.*, 5 Sandf. 551.

³ *Lawrence v. Great Northern R. Co.*, 20 L. J. Rep. Q. B. 293; *Bag-nall v. London and N. W. R.*, 7 H. & N. 423; *Brown v. Cayuga and Susquehanna R. R. Co.*, 12 N. Y. 487.

and to pay him that value only would be to make very inadequate compensation.

It seems clear that, in these cases, it is proper and just that the injuries suffered and the benefits received, by the proprietor, as owner of the remaining portion of the land, should be taken into account in measuring the compensation. This, indeed, is generally conceded; but what injuries shall be allowed for, or what benefits estimated, is not always so apparent. The question, as we find it considered by the authorities, seems to be, not so much what the value is of that which is taken, but whether what remains is reduced in value by the appropriation, and if so, to what extent; in other words, what pecuniary injury the owner sustains by a part of his land being appropriated. But, in estimating either the injuries or the benefits, those which the owner sustains or receives in common with the community generally, and which are not peculiar to him and connected with his ownership, use, and enjoyment of the particular parcel of land, should be altogether excluded, as it would be unjust to compensate him for the one, or to charge him with the other, when no account is taken of such incidental benefits and injuries with other citizens who receive or feel them equally with himself, but whose lands do not chance to be taken.¹

¹ In *Somerville and Easton R. R. Co. v. Doughty*, 22 N. J. 495, a motion was made for a new trial on an assessment of compensation for land taken by a railroad company, on the ground that the judge in his charge to the jury informed them "that they were authorized by law to ascertain and assess the damages sustained by the plaintiff to his other lands not taken and occupied by the defendants; to his dwelling-house, and other buildings and improvements, by reducing their value, changing their character, obstructing their free use, by subjecting his buildings to the hazards of fire, his family and stock to injury and obstruction in their necessary passage across the road, the inconvenience caused by embankments or excavations, and, in general, the effect of the railroad

upon his adjacent lands, in deteriorating their value, in the condition they were found, whether adapted for agricultural purposes only, or for dwellings, stores, shops, or other like purposes."

"On a careful review of this charge," says the judge, delivering the opinion of the court, "I cannot see that any legal principle was violated, or any unsound doctrine advanced. The charter provides that the jury shall assess the value of the land and materials taken by the company, and the damages. The damages here contemplated are not damages to the land actually occupied or covered by the road, but such damages as the owner may sustain in his other and adjacent lands not occupied by the company's road. His buildings may be reduced in value by the con-

with reference to what *it is worth for sale, in view of [* 568] the uses to which it may be applied, and not simply in reference to its productiveness to the owner in the condition in which he has seen fit to leave it.¹ Second, if less than the whole estate is taken, then there is further to be considered how much the portion not taken is increased or diminished in value in consequence of the appropriation.²

jury sustained by having the property taken; neither more nor less." And see *Richmond, &c. Co. v. Rogers*, 1 Duvall, 135; *Robinson v. Robinson*, 1 Duvall, 162; *Holton v. Milwaukee*, 31 Wis. 27; *Root's Case*, 77 Penn. St. 276; *East Brandywine, &c. R. R. Co. v. Ranck*, 78 Penn. St. 454.

¹ *Matter of Furman Street*, 17 Wend. 669; *Tide-Water Canal Co. v. Archer*, 9 Gill & J. 480; *State v. Burlington, &c. R. R. Co.*, 1 Iowa, 386; *Parks v. Boston*, 15 Pick. 206; *First Parish, &c. v. Middlesex*, 7 Gray, 106; *Dickenson v. Inhabitants of Fitchburg*, 13 Gray, 546; *Lexington v. Long*, 31 Mo. 369.

² *Denton v. Polk*, 9 Iowa, 594; *Parks v. Boston*, 15 Pick. 198; *Dickenson v. Fitchburg*, 13 Gray, 546; *Harvey v. Lackawanna, &c. R. R. Co.*, 47 Penn. St. 428; *Newby v. Platte County*, 25 Mo. 258; *Pacific R. R. Co. v. Chrystal*, 25 Mo. 544; *Somerville and Easton R. R. Co. ads Doughty*, 22 N. J. 495; *Carpenter v. Landaff*, 42 N. H. 218; *Troy and Boston R. R. Co. v. Lee*, 13 Barb. 169; *Tide-Water Canal Co. v. Archer*, 9 Gill & J. 480; *Winona and St. Paul R. R. Co. v. Waldron*, 11 Minn. 515; *Nicholson v. N. Y. and N. H. R. R. Co.*, 22 Conn. 74; *Nichols v. Bridgeport*, 23 Conn. 189; *Harding v. Funk*, 8 Kan. 315; *Holton v. Milwaukee*, 31 Wis. 27. "Compensation is an equivalent for property taken, or for an injury. It must be ascertained by estimating the actual damage the party has sustained. That damage is the sum of the actual

value of the property taken, and of the injury done to the residue of the property by the use of that part which is taken. The benefit is, in part, an equivalent to the loss and damage. The loss and damage of the defendant is the value of the land the company has taken. and the injury which the location and use of the road through his tract may cause to the remainder. The amount which may be assessed for these particulars the company admits that it is bound to pay. But, as a set-off, it claims credit for the benefit the defendant has received from the construction of the road. That benefit may consist in the enhanced value of the residue of his tract. When the company has paid the defendant the excess of his loss or damage over and above the benefit and advantage he has derived from the road, he will have received a just compensation. It is objected that the enhanced salable value of the land should not be assessed as a benefit to the defendant, because it is precarious and uncertain. The argument admits that the enhanced value, if permanent, should be assessed. But whether the appreciation is permanent and substantial, or transient and illusory, is a subject about which the court is not competent to determine. It must be submitted to a jury, who will give credit to the company according to the circumstances. The argument is not tenable, that an increased salable value is no benefit to the owner of land unless he sells it. This is true if it be assumed that the

also those incidental injuries to other property, such not give to other persons a right to compensation,¹ allowing those which directly affect the value of the of the land not taken ; such as the necessity for increases and the like.² And if an assessment on these principles the benefits equal the damages, and awards the owner he is nevertheless to be considered as having received compensation, and consequently as not being in position to But in some States, by constitutional provision or by statute a party whose property is taken is entitled to have the assessed to him without any deduction for benefits.⁴

compensation for the land taken must be made in money. *Sutton v. Louisville*, 5 Dana, 28; *Rice v. Turnpike Co.*, 7 Dana, 81; *Jacob v. Louisville*, 9 Dana, 114. And some other States have established, by their constitutions, the rule that benefits shall not be deducted. See *Deaton v. County of Polk*, 9 Iowa, 596; *Giesy v. Cincinnati, W. and Z. R. R. Co.*, 4 Ohio, n. s. 308; *Woodfolk v. Nashville R. R. Co.*, 2 Swan, 422. But the cases generally adopt the doctrine stated in the text; and if the owner is paid his actual damages, he has no occasion to complain because his neighbors are fortunate enough to receive a benefit. *Greenville and Columbia R. R. Co. v. Partlow*, 5 Rich. 438; *Mayor, &c. of Lexington v. Long*, 31 Mo. 369.

¹ *Somerville, &c. R. R. Co. ads. Doughty*, 22 N. J. 495; *Dorlan v. East Brandywine, &c. R. R. Co.*, 46 Penn. St. 520; *Proprietors, &c. v. Nashua and Lowell R. R. Co.*, 10 Cush. 385; *Louisville and Nashville R. R. Co. v. Thompson*, 18 B. Monr. 735; *Winona and St. Peter's R. R. Co. v. Denman*, 10 Minn. 267.

² *Pennsylvania R. R. Co. v. Reiley*, 8 Penn. St. 445; *Greenville and Columbia R. R. Co. v. Partlow*, 5 Rich. 439; *Dearborn v. Railroad Co.*, 4 Fost. 179; *Carpenter v. Landaff*, 42 N. H. 220; *Dorlan v. East Brandywine, &c.*

R. R. Co., 46 Penn. St. 520; *and St. Peter's R. R. Co. v. Denman*, 10 Minn. 267; *Mount Vernon Co.'s Petition*, 35 N. H. 100. If a part of a meeting-house is taken for a highway, it is not the anticipated annoyance to the shippers by the use of noisy and dissolute persons on the Sabbath could form no basis for an assessment of damages. See *Woburn v. Middlesex R. R. Co.*, Gray, 106.

³ *White v. County Commissioners of Norfolk*, 2 Cush. 361; *White v. Boston and Maine R. R. Co.*, Allen, 133; *Nichols v. State*, 23 Conn. 189. But it is not competent for the commissioner to award the compensation to be made in kind or in part in any thing but money. An award of "one hundred and fifty dollars, with a stop for cattle," is not undertaking to pay the owner's inconveniences to be furnished, and which he may not be able to pay, certainly cannot be compensation instead of money. See *Rockford, &c. R. R. Co. v. Holler*, 7 Ohio 100. See *Rockford, &c. R. R. Co. v. Pinger*, 66 Ill. 510.

⁴ *Wilson v. Rockford R. R. Co.*, 59 Ill. 273; *Carpenter v. Rockford R. R. Co.*, 77 Ill. 250; *Todd v.*

* CHAPTER XVI.

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THE POLICE POWER OF THE STATES.

WHEN questions arise of conflict between national and State authority, and questions whether the State exceeds its just powers in dealing with the property and restraining the actions of individuals, it often becomes necessary to consider the extent and proper bounds of a power in the States, which, like that of taxation, pervades every department of business and reaches to every interest and every subject of profit or enjoyment. We refer to what is known as the police power.

The police of a State, in a comprehensive sense, embraces its whole system of internal regulation, by which the State seeks not only to preserve the public order and to prevent offences against the State, but also to establish for the intercourse of citizen with citizen those rules of good manners and good neighborhood which are calculated to prevent a conflict of rights, and to insure to each the uninterrupted enjoyment of his own, so far as is reasonably consistent with a like enjoyment of rights by others.¹

In the present chapter we shall take occasion to speak of the police power principally as it affects the use and enjoyment of property ; the object being to show the universality of its presence,

¹ Blackstone defines the public police and economy as "the due regulation and domestic order of the kingdom, whereby the inhabitants of a State, like members of a well-governed family, are bound to conform their general behavior to the rules of propriety, good neighborhood, and good manners, and to be decent, industrious, and inoffensive in their respective stations." 4 Bl. Com. 162. Jeremy Bentham, in his General View of Public Offences, has this definition: "Police is in general a system of pre-

caution, either for the prevention of crimes or of calamities. Its business may be distributed into eight distinct branches: 1. Police for the prevention of offences; 2. Police for the prevention of calamities; 3. Police for the prevention of endemic diseases; 4. Police of charity; 5. Police of interior communications; 6. Police of public amusements; 7. Police for recent intelligence; 8. Police for registration." Edinburgh Ed. of Works, Part IX. p. 157.

“This police power of the State,” says another eminent judge, “extends to the protection of the lives, limbs, health, comfort, and quiet of all persons, and the protection of all property within the State. According to the maxim, *Sic utere tuo ut alienum non lædas*, which being of universal application, it must, of course, be within the range of legislative action to define the mode and manner in which every one may so use his own as not to injure others.” And again: [By this] “general police power of the State, persons and property are subjected to all kinds of restraints and burdens, in order to secure the general comfort, health, and prosperity of the * State; of the perfect right [* 574] in the legislature to do which, no question ever was, or, upon acknowledged general principles, ever can be made, so far as natural persons are concerned.”¹

Where the power is located. In the American constitutional system, the power to establish the ordinary regulations of police has been left with the individual States, and it cannot be taken from them, either wholly or in part, and exercised under legislation of Congress.² Neither can the national government, through any of its departments or officers, assume any supervision of the police regulations of the States. All that the federal authority

State, 15 Md. 390; Police Commissioners v. Louisville, 3 Bush, 597; Wynehamer v. People, 13 N. Y. 378; Taney, Ch. J., in License Cases, 5 How. 583; Waite, Ch. J., in Munn v. Illinois, 94 U. S. Rep. 113, 124.

¹ Redfield, Ch. J., in Thorpe v. Rutland and Burlington R. R. Co., 27 Vt. 149. See the maxim, *Sic utere, &c.*, — “Enjoy your own property in such manner as not to injure that of another,” — in Broom, Legal Maxims (5th Am. ed.), p. 327; Wharton, Legal Maxims, No. XC. See also Turbeville v. Stampe, 1 Ld. Raym. 264, and 1 Salk. 13; Jeffries v. Williams, 5 Exch. 792; Humphries v. Brogden, 12 Q. B. 739; Pixley v. Clark, 35 N. Y. 520; Philadelphia v. Scott, 81 Penn. St. 80.

² So decided in United States v. DeWitt, 9 Wall. 41, in which a section of the Internal Revenue Act of 1867 — which undertook to make it a

misdemeanor to mix for sale naphtha and illuminating oils, or to sell oil of petroleum inflammable at a less temperature than 110° Fahrenheit — was held to be a mere police regulation, and as such void within the States. That the States may pass such laws, see Patterson v. Commonwealth, 11 Bush, 311. On the general subject of the police power of the States, see also United States v. Reese, 92 U. S. Rep. 214; United States v. Cruikshank, 92 U. S. Rep. 542. But the States cannot, by police regulations, interfere with the control by Congress over inter-state commerce; as, for instance, forbidding the introduction into the State of Mexican or Texan cattle at certain seasons, Hannibal, &c. R. R. Co. v. Husen, 95 U. S. Rep. 465; or forbidding discriminations between passengers, on account of color, &c., as they travel from State to State, Hall v. DeCuir, 95 U. S. Rep. 485.

remove from State control the rights and properties which depend for their existence or enforcement upon contracts, as to relieve them from the operation of such general regulations for the good government of the State and the protection of the rights of individuals as may be deemed important. All contracts and all rights, it is declared, are subject to this power; and not only may regulations which affect them be established by the State, but all such regulations must be subject to change from time to time, as the general well-being of the community may require, or as the circumstances may change, or as experience may demonstrate the necessity.¹

¹ In the case of *Thorpe v. Rutland and Burlington R. R. Co.*, 27 Vt. 140, a question arose under a provision in the Vermont General Railroad Law of 1849, which required each railroad corporation to erect and maintain fences on the line of their road, and also cattle guards at all farm and road crossings, suitable and sufficient to prevent cattle and other animals from getting upon the railroad, and which made the corporation and its agents liable for all damages which should be done by their agents or engines to cattle, horses, or other animals thereon, if occasioned by the want of such fences and cattle guards. It was not disputed that this provision would be valid as to such corporations as might be afterwards created within the State; but in respect to those previously in existence, and whose charters contained no such provision, it was claimed that this legislation was inoperative, since otherwise its effect would be to modify, and to that extent to violate, the obligation of the charter-contract. "The case," say the court, "resolves itself into the narrow question of the right of the legislature, by general statute, to require all railways, whether now in operation or hereafter to be chartered or built, to fence their roads upon both sides, and provide sufficient cattle guards at all farm

and road crossings, under penalty of paying all damages caused by their neglect to comply with such requirements. . . . We think the power of the legislature to control existing railways in this respect may be found in the general control over the police of the country, which resides in the law-making power in all free States, and which is, by the fifth article of the bill of rights of this State, expressly declared to reside perpetually and inalienably in the legislature; which is, perhaps, no more than the enunciation of a general principle applicable to all free States, and which cannot therefore be violated so as to deprive the legislature of the power, even by express grant to any mere public or private corporation. And when the regulation of the police of a city or town, by general ordinances, is given to such towns and cities, and the regulation of their own internal police is given to railroads to be carried into effect by their by-laws and other regulations, it is of course always, in all such cases, subject to the superior control of the legislature. That is a responsibility which legislatures cannot divest themselves of if they would.

"So far as railroads are concerned, this police power which resides primarily and ultimately in the legislature is twofold: 1. The police of the

which have held * that the rights insured to private cor- [* 576] porations by their charters, and the manner of their exercise, are subject to such new regulations as from time to time may be made by the State with a view to the public protection, health, and safety, and in order to guard properly the rights of other individuals and corporations. Although these charters are to be regarded as contracts, and the rights assured by them are inviolable, it does not follow that these rights are at once, by force of the charter-contract, removed from the sphere of State regulation, and that the charter implies an undertaking, on the part of the State, that in the same way in which their exercise is * permissible at first, and under the regulations then ex- [* 577] isting, and those only, may the corporators continue to exercise their rights while the artificial existence continues. The obligation of the contract by no means extends so far; but, on the contrary, the rights and privileges which come into existence under it are placed upon the same footing with other legal rights and privileges of the citizen, and subject in like manner to proper rules for their due regulation, protection, and enjoyment.

[The limit to the exercise of the police power in these cases must be this: the regulations must have reference to the comfort, safety, or welfare of society;] they must not be in conflict with any of the provisions of the charter; and they must not, under pretence of regulation, take from the corporation any of the essential rights and privileges which the charter confers. In short, they must be police regulations in fact, and not amendments of the charter in curtailment of the corporate franchise.¹

13 Ill. 548; Fitchburg R. R. v. Grand Junction R. R. Co., 1 Allen, 552; Veazie v. Mayo, 45 Me. 560; Peters v. Iron Mountain R. R. Co., 23 Mo. 107; Grannahan v. Hannibal, &c. R. R. Co., 30 Mo. 546; Indianapolis and Cincinnati R. R. Co. v. Kercheval, 16 Ind. 84; Galena and Chicago U. R. R. Co. v. Appleby, 28 Ill. 283; Blair v. Milwaukee, &c. R. R. Co., 20 Wis. 254; State v. Mathews, 44 Mo. 523; Commissioners, &c. v. Holyoke Water Power Co., 104 Mass. 446; Railroad Co. v. Fuller, 17 Wall. 560; Toledo, &c. R. R. Co. v. Deacon, 63 Ill. 91; Ames v. Lake Supe-

rior, &c. R. R. Co., 21 Minn. 241; N. W. Fertilizing Co. v. Hyde Park, 70 Ill. 634; State v. New Haven, &c. Co., 43 Conn. 351.

¹ Washington Bridge Co. v. State, 18 Conn. 53; Bailey v. Philadelphia, &c. R. R. Co., 4 Harr. 389; State v. Noyes, 47 Me. 189; Pingrey v. Washburn, 1 Aiken, 268; Miller v. N. Y. and Erie R. R. Co., 21 Barb. 513; People v. Jackson and Michigan Plank Road Co., 9 Mich. 307; Sloan v. Pacific R. R. Co., 61 Mo. 24; Attorney-General v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co., 35 Wis. 425. In Benson v. Mayor, &c. of New York, 10 Barb.

the obligation of contracts.¹ And even a provision in a corporate charter, empowering the legislature to alter, modify, or repeal it, would not authorize a subsequent act which, on pretence of amendment, or of a police regulation, would have the effect to appropriate a portion of the corporate property to the public use.² And where by its charter the corporation was empowered to construct over a river a certain bridge, which must necessarily constitute an obstruction to the navigation of the river, a subsequent amendment making the corporation liable for such obstruction was held void, as in effect depriving the corporation of the very right which the charter assured to it.³ So where the charter reserved to the legislature the right of modification after the corporators had been reimbursed their expenses in constructing the bridge, with twelve per cent interest thereon, * an amendment before such reimbursement, [* 579] requiring the construction of a fifty-foot draw for the passage of vessels, in place of one of thirty-two feet, was held unconstitutional and void.⁴ So it has been held that a power to

¹ Ibid. And see *State v. Noyes*, 47 Me. 189. Compare *Camden, &c. R. R. Co. v. Briggs*, 2 N. J. 623; and also *Philadelphia, &c. R. R. Co. v. Bowers*, 4 Houst. 506, in which an act regulating freights and fares, where no such power was reserved in the charter, was held void. A view opposed to this is intimated by *Ryan*, Ch. J., in *Attorney-General v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 35 Wis. 425.

² It has been held that the reservation of a right to amend or repeal would not justify an act requiring a railroad company to cause a proposed new street or highway to be taken across their track, and to cause the necessary embankments, excavations, and other work to be done for that purpose at their own expense; thus not only appropriating a part of their property to another public use, but compelling them to fit it for such use. *Miller v. N. Y. and Erie R. R. Co.*, 21 Barb. 513. This, however, can scarcely be a more severe exercise of the power than is the amendment to the charter of a railroad corporation

which limits the rates of fare and freight which may be charged; for the exercise of this might be carried to an extent which would annihilate the whole value of railroad property. The power, however, is very fully sustained, where the right to amend is reserved in the charter. *Attorney-General v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 35 Wis. 425; *Blake v. Winona, &c. R. R. Co.*, 19 Minn. 418; s. c. 18 Am. Rep. 345; *Chicago, &c. R. R. Co. v. Iowa*, 94 U. S. Rep. 155; *Peck v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 6 Biss. 177. See a like rule applied to a ferry company in *Parker v. Metropolitan R. R. Co.*, 109 Mass. 506. A requirement that rates of fare and freight shall be annually fixed and published is legitimate as an exercise of the police power. *Railroad Co. v. Fuller*, 17 Wall. 560.

³ *Bailey v. Philadelphia, &c. R. R. Co.*, 4 Harr. 389. Compare *Commonwealth v. Penn. Canal Co.*, 66 Penn. St. 41; s. c. 5 Am. Rep. 329.

⁴ *Washington Bridge Co. v. State*, 18 Conn. 53.

owner of beasts killed or injured may maintain an action for the damage suffered, notwithstanding he may not himself be free from negligence.¹ But it would, perhaps, require an express legislative declaration that the corporation should be liable for the beasts thus destroyed to * create so great an in- [* 580] novation in the common law. The general rule, where a corporation has failed to obey the police regulations established for its government, would not make the corporation liable to the party injured, if his own negligence contributed with that of the corporation in producing the injury.²

The State may also regulate the grade of railways, and prescribe how, and upon what grade, railway tracks shall cross each

injuries by fire communicated by their locomotive engines was sustained as to companies previously in existence, in *Lyman v. Boston and Worcester R. R. Co.*, 4 Cush. 288; *Rodemacher v. Milwaukee, &c. R. R. Co.* 41 Iowa, 297; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 592; *Gorman v. Pacific Railroad*, 26 Mo. 441. But it is not competent to make railroad companies liable for injuries for which they are in no way responsible. It is therefore held that an act imposing upon railroad companies the expense of coroners' inquests, burial, &c., of persons who may die on its cars, or be killed by collision, &c., is invalid as applied to cases where the company is not in fault. *Ohio, &c. R. R. Co. v. Lackey*, 78 Ill. 55. That it is as competent to lessen the common law liabilities of railroad companies as to increase them, see *Kerby v. Pennsylvania R. R. Co.*, 76 Penn. St. 506. And see *Camden and Amboy R. R. Co. v. Briggs*, 22 N. J. 623; *Trice v. Hannibal, &c. R. R. Co.*, 49 Mo. 188.

¹ *Corwin v. N. Y. and Erie R. R. Co.*, 13 N. Y. 42; *Indianapolis and Cincinnati R. R. Co. v. Townsend*, 10 Ind. 38; *Jeffersonville, &c. R. R. Co. v. Nichols*, 30 Ind. 321; *Same v. Parkhurst*, 34 Ind. 501; *Suydam v. Moore*, 8 Barb. 358; *Fawcett v. York and North Midland R. Co.*, 15 Jur. 173; *Waldron v. Rensselaer and*

Schenectady R. R. Co., 8 Barb. 390; *Horne v. Atlantic and St. Lawrence R. R. Co.*, 35 N. H. 169; *O'Bannon v. Louisville, &c. R. R. Co.*, 8 Bush, 348; *Illinois Cent. R. R. Co. v. Arnold*, 47 Ill. 173; *Hinman v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 28 Iowa, 491.

² *Jackson v. Rutland and Burlington R. R. Co.*, 25 Vt. 150. And see *Marsh v. N. Y. and Erie R. R. Co.*, 14 Barb. 364; *Joliet and N. I. R. R. Co. v. Jones*, 20 Ill. 221; *Tonawanda R. R. Co. v. Munger*, 5 Denio, 255, and 4 N. Y. 255; *Price v. New Jersey R. R. Co.*, 31 N. J. 229; *Drake v. Philadelphia, &c. R. R. Co.*, 51 Penn. St. 240. In *Indianapolis and Cincinnati R. R. Co. v. Kercheval*, 16 Ind. 84, it was held that a clause in the charter of a railroad corporation which declared that when the corporators should have procured a right of way as therein provided, they should be seised in fee-simple of the right to the land, and should have the sole use and occupation of the same, and no person, body corporate or politic, should in any way interfere therewith, molest, disturb, or injure any of the rights and privileges thereby granted, &c., would not take from the State the power to establish a police regulation making the corporation liable for cattle killed by their cars.

become common, and which give an action to the representatives of persons killed by the wrongful act, neglect, or default of another, may unquestionably be made applicable to corporations previously chartered, and may be sustained as only giving a remedy for a wrong for which the common law had failed to make provision.¹ And it cannot be doubted that there is ample power in the legislative department of the State to adopt all necessary legislation for the purpose of enforcing the obligations of railway companies as carriers of persons and goods to accommodate the public impartially, and to make every reasonable provision for carrying with safety and expedition.²

Restraints on Sale of Liquors. Those statutes which regulate or altogether prohibit the sale of intoxicating drinks as a beverage have also been, by some persons, supposed to conflict with the federal Constitution. Such of these, however, as assume to

sons assume no such obligations at the common law; and where a company of individuals receive from the State a charter which makes them carriers of persons, and chargeable as such for their own default or negligence only, it may well be doubted if it be competent for the legislature afterwards to impose upon their contracts new burdens, and make them respond in damages where they have been guilty of no default. In other words, whether that could be a proper police regulation which did not assume to regulate the business of the carrier with a view to the just protection of the rights and interests of others, but which imposed a new obligation, for the benefit of others, upon a party guilty of no neglect of duty. But perhaps such a regulation would not go further than that in *Stanley v. Stanley*, 26 Me. 191, where it was held competent for the legislature to pass an act making the stockholders of existing banks liable for all corporate debts thereafter created; or in *Peters v. Iron Mountain R. R. Co.*, 23 Mo. 107, and *Grannahan v. Hannibal, &c. R. R. Co.*, 30 Mo. 546, where an act was sustained

which made companies previously chartered liable for the debts of contractors to the workmen whom they had employed.

¹ *Southwestern R. R. Co. v. Paulk*, 24 Geo. 356; *Coosa River Steamboat Co. v. Barclay*, 30 Ala. 120. In *Boston, Concord, and Montreal R. R. v. State*, 32 N. H. 215, a statute making railroad corporations liable to indictment and fine, in case of the loss of life by the negligence or carelessness of the proprietors or their servants, was adjudged constitutional, as applicable to corporations previously in existence.

² On this subject in general, see *Redf. on Railw. c. 32, sec. 2*; *Louisville, &c. R. R. Co. v. Burke*, 6 Cold. 45; *New Albany and Salem R. R. Co. v. Tilton*, 12 Ind. 3; *Buckley v. N. Y. & N. H. R. R. Co.*, 27 Conn. 479; *Ohio & Mississippi R. R. Co. v. McClelland*, 25 Ill. 144; *Bradley v. Buffalo, &c. R. R. Co.*, 34 N. Y. 429; *Boston, C. & M. R. R. Co. v. State*, 32 N. H. 215; *Pennsylvania R. R. Co. v. Riblet*, 66 Penn. St. 164; s. c. 5 Am. Rep. 360. And see other cases cited, *ante*, pp. *578-*579, notes.

not exclude regulations by the States, except so far as they might come in conflict with those established by Congress; and that, consequently, as Congress had not undertaken to regulate commerce in liquors between the States, a law of New Hampshire could not be held void which punished the sale, in that State, of gin purchased in Boston and sold in New Hampshire, notwithstanding the sale was in the cask in which it was imported, but by one not licensed by the selectmen.¹

It would seem, from the views expressed by the several members of the court in these cases, that the State laws known as Prohibitory Liquor Laws, the purpose of which is to prevent altogether * the manufacture and sale of intoxicating [* 583] drinks as a beverage, so far as legislation can accomplish that object, cannot be held void as in conflict with the power of Congress to regulate commerce, and to levy imposts and duties. And in several cases it has been held that the fact that such laws may tend to prevent or may absolutely preclude the fulfilment of contracts previously made, is no objection to their validity.² Any change in the police laws, or indeed in any other laws, might have a like consequence.

The same laws have also been sustained, when the question of conflict with State constitutions, or with general fundamental principles, has been raised. They are looked upon as police regulations established by the legislature for the prevention of intemperance, pauperism, and crime, and for the abatement of nuisances.³ It has also been held competent to declare the liquor

¹ See also *Bode v. State*, 7 Gill, 326; *Jones v. People*, 14 Ill. 196; *State v. Wheeler*, 25 Conn. 290; *Santo v. State*, 2 Iowa, 202; *Commonwealth v. Clapp*, 5 Gray, 97; *Metropolitan Board v. Barrie*, 34 N. Y. 657.

² *People v. Hawley*, 3 Mich. 330; *Reynolds v. Geary*, 26 Conn. 179.

³ *Commonwealth v. Kendall*, 12 Cush. 414; *Commonwealth v. Clapp*, 5 Gray, 97; *Commonwealth v. Howe*, 13 Gray, 26; *Santo v. State*, 2 Iowa, 202; *One House v. State*, 4 Greene (Iowa), 172; *Zumhoff v. State*, 4 Greene (Iowa), 526; *State v. Donehey*, 8 Iowa, 396; *State v. Wheeler*,

25 Conn. 290; *Reynolds v. Geary*, 26 Conn. 179; *Oviatt v. Pond*, 29 Conn. 479; *People v. Hawley*, 3 Mich. 330; *People v. Gallagher*, 4 Mich. 244; *Jones v. People*, 14 Ill. 196; *State v. Prescott*, 27 Vt. 194; *Lincoln v. Smith*, 27 Vt. 328; *Gill v. Parker*, 31 Vt. 610. Compare *Beebe v. State*, 6 Ind. 501; *Meshmeier v. State*, 11 Ind. 484; *Wynehamer v. People*, 13 N. Y. 378. In *Reynolds v. Geary*, 26 Conn. 179, the State law forbidding suits for the price of liquors sold out of the State, to evade the State law, was sustained and applied, notwithstanding the contract was valid where made. The general rule is, however,

must be justified upon the highest reasons of public benefit; but, whether satisfactory or not, the reasons address themselves exclusively to the legislative wisdom.

Taxing Forbidden Occupations. Within the last two or three years, new questions have arisen in regard to these laws, and other State regulations, arising out of the imposition of burdens on various occupations by Congress, with a view to raising revenue for the national government. These burdens are imposed in the form of what are called license fees; and it has been claimed that, when the party paid the fee, he was thereby licensed to carry on the business, despite the regulations which the State government might make upon the subject. This view, however, has not been taken by the courts, who have regarded the congressional legislation imposing a license fee as only a species of taxation, without the payment of which the business could not lawfully be carried on, but which, nevertheless, did not propose to make any business lawful which was not lawful before, or to relieve it from any burdens or restrictions imposed by the regulations of the State. The licenses give no authority, and are mere receipts for taxes.¹

Other Regulations affecting Commerce. Numerous other illustrations might be given of the power in the States to make regulations affecting commerce, which are sustainable as regulations of police. Among these, quarantine regulations and health laws of every description will readily suggest themselves, and these are or may be sometimes carried to the extent of ordering the destruction of private property when infected with disease or otherwise dangerous.² These regulations * have generally [* 585]

¹ License Tax Cases, 5 Wall. 462; *Purvear v. Commonwealth*, 5 Wall. 475; *Commonwealth v. Holbrook*, 10 Allen, 200; *Block v. Jacksonville*, 36 Ill. 301. A State may tax a business notwithstanding the State constitution forbids its being licensed. *Youngblood v. Sexton*, 32 Mich. 406; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 654. As to when license fees are taxes, see *ante*, p. *201 and note.

² See remarks of *Grier, J.*, in License Cases, 5 How. 632; *Meeker v. Van Rensselaer*, 15 Wend. 397. A liquor law may annul a previous

license, and not be invalid on that ground. See *ante*, p. *283, note. Under the police power, the dealing in liquors even for lawful purposes may be restricted to persons approved for moral character. *In re Ruth*, 32 Iowa, 250.

It is usual, either by general law or by municipal charters, to confer very extensive powers upon local boards of health, under which, when acting in good faith, they may justify themselves in taking possession of, purifying, or even destroying, the buildings or other property of the

theirs ; and that the harbor-masters or either of them should have authority to determine how far and in what instances it was the duty of the masters and others, having charge of ships or vessels, to accommodate each other in their respective situations ; and it imposed a penalty for refusing or neglecting to obey the directions of the harbor-masters or either of them. In a suit brought against the master of a steam vessel, who had refused to move his vessel a certain distance as directed by one of the harbor-masters, in order to accommodate a new arrival, it was insisted on the defence that the act was an unconstitutional invasion of the power of Congress over commerce, but it was sustained as being merely a regulation prescribing the manner of exercising individual rights over property employed in commerce.¹

* The line of distinction between that which consti- [* 586]
tutes an interference with commerce, and that which is

¹ *Vanderbilt v. Adams*, 7 Cow. 351. *Woodworth, J.*, in this case, states very clearly the principle on which police regulations, in such cases, are sustainable: "It seems to me the power exercised in this case is essentially necessary for the purpose of protecting the rights of all concerned. It is not, in the legitimate sense of the term, a violation of any right, but the exercise of a power indispensably necessary, where an extensive commerce is carried on. If the harbor is crowded with vessels arriving daily from foreign parts, the power is incident to such a state of things. Disorder and confusion would be the consequence, if there was no control. . . . The right assumed under the law would not be upheld, if exerted beyond what may be considered a necessary police regulation. The line between what would be a clear invasion of right on the one hand, and regulations not lessening the value of the right, and calculated for the benefit of all, must be distinctly marked. . . . Police regulations are legal and binding, because for the general benefit, and do not proceed to the length of impairing any right, in the proper sense of that term. The

sovereign power in a community, therefore, may and ought to prescribe the manner of exercising individual rights over property. It is for the better protection and enjoyment of that absolute dominion which the individual claims. The power rests on the implied right and duty of the supreme power to protect all by statutory regulations ; so that, on the whole, the benefit of all is promoted. Every public regulation in a city may, and does in some sense, limit and restrict the absolute right that existed previously. But this is not considered as an injury. So far from it, the individual, as well as others, is supposed to be benefited. It may, then, be said that such a power is incident to every well-regulated society, and without which it could not well exist." See *Cooley v. Board of Wardens*, 12 How. 289; *Owners of James Gray v. Owners of The John Frazer*, 21 How. 184; *Benedict v. Vanderbilt*, 1 Robertson, 194; *Steamship Co. v. Joliffe*, 2 Wall. 450; *Port Wardens v. The Ward*, 14 La. Ann. 289; *Gilman v. Philadelphia*, 3 Wall. 726, 731; *Cisco v. Roberts*, 36 N. Y. 292.

thorize the sale of the thing imported; that consequently a penalty inflicted for selling an article in the character of importer was in opposition to the act of Congress, which authorized importation; that a power to tax an article in the hands of the importer the instant it was landed was the same in effect as a power to tax it whilst entering the port; that consequently the law of Maryland was obnoxious to the charge of unconstitutionality, on the ground of its violating the two provisions referred to.¹ And a State law which required the master of every vessel engaged in foreign commerce to pay a certain sum to a State officer, on account of every passenger brought from a foreign country into the State, or before landing any alien passenger, was held void for similar reasons.²

On the other hand, a law of the State of New York was sustained which required, under a penalty, that the master of every vessel arriving from a foreign port should report to the mayor or recorder of the city of New York an account of his passengers; the object being to prevent New York from being burdened by an influx of persons brought thither in ships from foreign countries and the other States, and to that end to require a report of the names, places of birth, &c., of all passengers, that the necessary steps might be taken by the city authorities to prevent them from becoming chargeable as paupers.³ And a State regulation of pilots and pilotage was held unobjectionable, though it was conceded that Congress had full power to make regulations on the same * subject, which, however, it had not exer- [* 588] cised.⁴ These several cases, and the elaborate discussions with which the decisions in each were accompanied, together with the leading case of *Gibbons v. Ogden*,⁵ may be almost said to exhaust the reasoning upon the subject, and to leave little to be

¹ *Brown v. Maryland*, 12 Wheat. 419.

² *Passenger Cases*, 7 How. 283; see also *Lin Sing v. Washburn*, 20 Cal. 534, where a State law imposing a special tax on every Chinese person over eighteen years of age for each month of his residence in the State was held unconstitutional, as in conflict with the power of Congress over commerce.

³ *City of New York v. Miln*, 11 Pet. 102. See also *State v. The Constitution*, 42 Cal. 581.

⁴ *Cooley v. Board of Wardens*, 12 How. 299. See *Barnaby v. State*, 21 Ind. 450; *Steamship Co. v. Joliffe*, 2 Wall. 450; *Cisco v. Roberts*, 36 N. Y. 292.

⁵ 9 Wheat. 1. And see *Gilman v. Philadelphia*, 3 Wall. 713.

any portion of them.¹ The question what is a navigable stream would seem to be a mixed question of law and fact;² and though it is said that the legislature of the State may determine whether a * stream shall be considered a public highway [* 591] or not,³ yet if in fact it is not one, the legislature cannot make it so by simple declaration, since, if it is private property, the legislature cannot appropriate it to a public use without providing for compensation.⁴

The general right to control and regulate the public use of navigable waters is unquestionably in the State; but there are certain restrictions upon this right growing out of the power of Congress over commerce. Congress is empowered to regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several States; and wherever a river forms a highway upon which commerce is conducted with foreign nations or between States, it must fall under the control of Congress, under this power over commerce. The circumstance, however, that a stream is navigable, and capable of being used for foreign or inter-state commerce, does not exclude regulation by the State, if in fact Congress has not exercised its power in regard to it;⁵ or having exercised it, the State law does not come in conflict with the congressional regulations, or interfere with the rights which are permitted by them.

The decisions of the federal judiciary in regard to navigable waters seem to have settled the following points:—

1. That no State can grant an exclusive monopoly for the navi-

¹ *Commonwealth v. Charlestown*, 1 Pick. 180; *Kean v. Stetson*, 5 Pick. 492; *Arnold v. Mundy*, 6 N. J. 1; *Bird v. Smith*, 8 Watts, 434. They are equally for the use of the public in the winter when covered with ice; and one who cuts a hole in the ice in an accustomed way, by means of which one passing upon the ice is injured, is liable to an action for the injury. *French v. Camp*, 6 Shep. 433. An obstruction to a navigable stream is a nuisance which any one having occasion to use it may abate. *Inhabitants of Arundel v. McCulloch*, 10 Mass. 70; *State v. Moffett*, 1 Greene (Iowa), 247; *Selman v. Wolfe*, 27 Tex. 68.

² See *Treat v. Lord*, 42 Me. 552;

Weise v. Smith, 3 Oreg. 445; s. c. 8 Am. Rep. 621.

³ *Glover v. Powell*, 2 Stockt. 211; *American River Water Co. v. Amsden*, 6 Cal. 443; *Baker v. Lewis*, 33 Penn. St. 301.

⁴ *Morgan v. King*, 18 Barb. 284; s. c. 35 N. Y. 454.

⁵ *Wilson v. Black Bird Creek Marsh Co.*, 2 Pet. 245. In this case it was held that a State law permitting a creek navigable from the sea to be dammed so as to exclude vessels altogether was not opposed to the Constitution of the United States, there being no legislation by Congress with which it would come in conflict. And see *Wheeling Bridge Case*, 13 How. 518, and 18 How. 421.

subject to the control of Congress, the State law permitting the erection cannot be questioned on any ground of public inconvenience. The legislature must always have power to determine what public ways are needed, and to what extent the accommodation of travel over one way must yield to the greater necessity for another. But if the stream is one over which the regulations of Congress extend, the question is somewhat complicated, and it becomes necessary to consider whether such bridge will interfere with the regulations or not. But the bridge is not necessarily unlawful, because of constituting, to some degree, an obstruction to commerce, if it is properly built, and upon a proper plan, and if the general traffic of the country will be aided rather than impeded by its construction. There are many cases where a bridge over a river may be vastly more important than the navigation; and there are other cases where, although the traffic upon the river is important, yet an * inconvenience caused [* 598] by a bridge with draws would be much less seriously felt by the public, and be a much lighter burden upon trade and travel, than a break in a line of railroad communication necessitating the employment of a ferry. In general terms it may be said that the State may authorize such constructions, provided they do not constitute material obstructions to navigation; but whether they are to be regarded as material obstructions or not is to be determined in each case upon its own circumstances. The character of the structure, the facility afforded for vessels to pass it, the relative amount of traffic likely to be done upon the stream and over the bridge, and whether the traffic by rail would be likely to be more incommoded by the want of the bridge than the traffic by water with it, are all circumstances to be taken into account in determining this question. It is quite evident that a structure might constitute a material obstruction on the Ohio or the Mississippi, where vessels are constantly passing, which would be unobjectionable on a stream which a boat only enters at intervals of weeks or months. The decision of the State legislature that the erection is not an obstruction is not conclusive; but the final determination will rest with the federal courts, who have jurisdiction to cause the structure to be abated, if it be found to obstruct unnecessarily the traffic upon the water. Parties constructing the bridge must be prepared to show, not only the State authority, and that the plan and construction are

same power of regulating the speed and general conduct of ships or other vessels navigating its water highways, that it has to regulate the speed and conduct of persons and vehicles upon the ordinary highway ; subject always to the restriction that its regulations must not come in conflict with any regulations established by Congress for the foreign commerce or that between the States.¹

Levees and Drains. Where, under legislative authority, the construction of levees and embankments is required, to protect from overflow and destruction considerable tracts of country, assessments are commonly levied for the purpose on the owners of lands lying on or near the streams or bodies of water from which the danger is anticipated. But if the construction should be imposed as a duty upon residents or property owners in the neighborhood, that they should turn out periodically or in emergencies, and give personal attention and labor to the construction of the necessary defences against overflow and inundation, it is not perceived that there could be any difficulty in supporting such a regulation as one of police, or of resting it upon the same foundations which sustain the regulations in cities, by which duties are imposed on the occupants of buildings to take certain precautions against fires, not for their own protection exclusively, but for the protection of the general public.² Laws imposing on the owners the duty of draining large tracts of land which in their natural condition are unproductive, and are a source of danger to health, may be enacted under the same power,³ though in general the taxing power is employed for the purpose;⁴ and sometimes land is appropriated under the eminent domain.⁵

¹ *People v. Jenkins*, 1 Hill, 469 ; *People v. Roe*, 1 Hill, 470. As to the right to regulate fisheries in navigable waters, see *Gentile v. State*, 29 Ind. 409; *Phipps v. State*, 22 Md. 380; *People v. Reed*, 47 Barb. 235.

² *Cooley on Taxation*, 401, 402. See *State v. Newark*, 27 N. J. 185, 194, per *Elmer, J.*; *Crowley v. Copley*, 2 La. Ann. 390. In Pennsylvania it has been held that the State cannot, as a measure of police, compel the owner of lands bounded on inland tide-water to construct embankments to exclude the natural flow of the water, but that where the State con-

structs them at its own expense, and leaves them in possession of the owner, it may impose on him the duty of repair. *Philadelphia v. Scott*, 81 Penn. St. 80.

³ See *State v. City Council of Charleston*, 12 Rich. 702, 733.

⁴ *Reeves v. Treasurer of Wood Co.*, 8 Ohio, n. s. 333; *Sessions v. Crunklinton*, 20 Ohio, n. s. 349; *Egyptian Levee Co. v. Hardin*, 27 Mo. 495; *McGeehee v. Mathis*, 21 Ark. 40; *Yeatman v. Crandall*, 11 La. Ann. 220; *Scuffletown Fence Co. v. McAllister*, 12 Bush, 312.

⁵ Commissioners empowered to

licenses and observe various regulations, which are not important here, and imposed certain penalties for a refusal to observe the statute. The validity of the legislation was affirmed by the State court, which overruled various objections made on constitutional grounds, among which was, that in effect it deprived warehousemen of their property without due process of law. The warehousemen denied wholly the right of the legislature to prescribe charges for private services or for the use of private property, and it was urged by them that, if admitted at all, no bounds could be set to it. The court, in sustaining the power, placed it upon the same ground with the right to regulate the charges of hackmen, draymen, public ferrymen, and public millers.¹ The case being removed to the federal Supreme Court, the decision of the State court was affirmed, and the principle fully approved. The ground of the decision appears to be that the employment of these warehousemen is a public or *quasi* public employment; that their property in the business is "affected with a public interest," and thereby brought under that general power of control which the State possesses in the case of other public employments. Says Mr. Chief Justice *Waite*: "Under these powers the government regulates the conduct of its citizens one towards another, and the manner in which each shall use his own property, when such regulation becomes necessary for the public good. In their exercise it has been customary in England from time immemorial, and in this country from its first colonization, to regulate ferries, common carriers, hackmen, bakers, millers, wharfingers, &c., and in so doing to fix a maximum of charge to be made for services rendered, accommodations furnished, and articles sold. To this day statutes are to be found in many of the States upon some or all these subjects, and we think it has never yet been successfully contended that such legislation came within any of the constitutional prohibitions against interference with private property."² Some of the cases here referred to seem plain enough. Ferries are public highways, and when individuals are permitted to establish them, they are allowed the sovereign prerogative of charging and collecting tolls; and tolls can never be taken except by permission of the State, which generally ought to and does

¹ *Munn v. People*, 69 Ill. 80. In this case, Justices McAllister and Scott dissented.

² *Munn v. Illinois*, 94 U. S. Rep. 113, 125. In this case, Justices Field and Strong dissented.

upon himself a public employment, with special privileges which only the State can confer upon him, the case is clear enough; and it seems to have been the view of both courts in this case, that the circumstances were such as to give the warehousemen in Chicago, who were the only persons affected by the legislation, a "virtual" monopoly of the business of receiving and forwarding the grain of the country to and from that important point, and by the very fact of monopoly to give their business a public character, affect the property in it with a public interest, and render regulation of charges indispensable.¹

The phrase "affected with a public interest" has been brought into recent discussions from the treatise *De Portibus Maris* of Lord Hale, where the important passage is as follows: "A man for his own private advantage may, in a port or town, set up a wharf or crane, and may take what rates he and his customers can agree for cranage, wharfage, housellage, pesage; for he doth no more than is lawful for any man to do, viz., makes the most of his own. If the king or subject have a public wharf unto which all persons that come to that port must come and unlade or lade their goods as for the purpose, because they are the wharves only licensed by the queen, or because there is no other wharf in that port, as it may fall out where a port is newly erected; in that case there cannot be taken arbitrary and excessive duties for cranage, wharfage, pesage, &c., neither can they be enhanced to an immoderate rate; but the duties must be reasonable and moderate, though settled by the king's license or charter. For now the wharf, crane, and other conveniences are affected with a public interest, and they cease to be *juris privati* only; as if a man set out a street in new building on his own land; it is now no longer bare private interest, but is affected by a public interest."

If the case of a street thrown open to the public is an apt

¹ See what is said by *Breese*, Ch. J., in 69 Ill. 88-89, and by *Waite*, Ch. J., in 94 U. S. Rep. 131. In *Attorney-General v. Chicago, &c. R. R. Co.*, 35 Wis. 425, 589, Chief Justice *Ryan*, in his very able opinion affirming the right to fix railroad charges by amendment to charters which reserved the power of amend-

ment, intimated decided views in favor of the authority under the general power of police. That right would probably be claimed on the ground that railroads receive special privileges from the State; the eminent domain being always employed in their favor, and sometimes the power of taxation.

of a hostile army, or any other great public calamity.¹ Here the individual is in no degree in * fault, but his [* 595] interest must yield to that "necessity" which "knows no law." The establishment of limits within the denser portions of cities and villages, within which buildings constructed of inflammable materials shall not be erected or repaired, may also, in some cases, be equivalent to a destruction of private property; but regulations for this purpose have been sustained notwithstanding this result.² Wharf lines may also be established for the general good, even though they prevent the owners of waterfronts from building out on that which constitutes private property.³ And, whenever the legislature deem it necessary to the protection of a harbor to forbid the removal of stones, gravel, or sand from the beach, they may establish regulations to that effect under penalties, and make them applicable to the owners of the soil equally with other persons. Such regulations are only "a just restraint of an injurious use of property, which the legislature have authority" to impose.⁴

So a particular use of property may sometimes be forbidden, where, by a change of circumstances, and without the fault of the owner, that which was once lawful, proper, and unobjectionable has now become a public nuisance, endangering the public health or the public safety. Mill-dams are sometimes destroyed upon this ground;⁵ and churchyards which prove, in the advance of

¹ Saltpetre Case, 12 Coke, 13; Mayor, &c. of New York v. Lord, 18 Wend. 129; Russell v. Mayor, &c. of New York, 2 Denio, 461; Sorocco v. Geary, 3 Cal. 69; Hale v. Lawrence, 1 Zab. 714; American Print Works v. Lawrence, 1 Zab. 248; Meeker v. Van Rensselaer, 15 Wend. 397; McDonald v. Redwing, 13 Minn. 38; Philadelphia v. Scott, 81 Penn. St. 80; Dillon, Mun. Corp. §§ 756-759. And see Jones v. Richmond, 18 Grat. 517, for a case where the municipal authorities purchased and took possession of the liquor of a city about to be occupied by a capturing military force, and destroyed it to prevent the disorders that might be anticipated from free access to intoxicating drinks under the circum-

stances. And as to appropriation by military authorities, see Harmony v. Mitchell, 1 Blatch. 549; s. c. in error, 13 How. 115.

² Respublica v. Duquet, 2 Yeates, 493; Wadleigh v. Gilman, 3 Fairf. 403; Brady v. Northwestern Ins. Co., 11 Mich. 425; Vanderbilt v. Adams, 7 Cow. 352, per Woodworth, J.

³ Commonwealth v. Alger, 7 Cush. 53. See Hart v. Mayor, &c. of Albany, 9 Wend. 571.

⁴ Commonwealth v. Tewksbury, 11 Met. 55. A statute which prohibited the having in possession of game birds after a certain time, though killed within the lawful time, was sustained in Phelps v. Racey, 60 N. Y. 10.

⁵ Miller v. Craig, 3 Stockt. 175. And offensive manufactures may be

or sale of indecent books or pictures, and cause their destruction if seized ; or prohibit or regulate the places of amusement that may be resorted to for the purpose of gaming ;¹ or forbid altogether the keeping of implements made use of for unlawful games ; or prevent the keeping and exhibition of stallions in public places.²

So the markets are regulated, and particular articles allowed to be sold in particular places only,³ or after license ;⁴ weights and measures are established, and dealers compelled to conform to the fixed standards under penalty,⁵ and persons following particular occupations of a nature requiring special public supervision, such as auctioneers, draymen, hackmen, hucksters, victuallers, and the like, are required to take out licenses, and to conform to such rules and regulations as are deemed important for the public convenience and protection.⁶ These instances are more than

¹ *Tanner v. Trustees of Albion*, 5 Hill, 121; *Commonwealth v. Colton*, 8 Gray, 488; *State v. Hay*, 29 Me. 457; *State v. Freeman*, 38 N. H. 426.

² *Nolin v. Mayor of Franklin*, 4 Yerg. 163. A city may forbid the keeping of swine within its densely settled portions. *Commonwealth v. Patch*, 97 Mass. 221. Or slaughter-houses. *Watertown v. Mayo*, 109 Mass. 315. Compare *Blydenburg v. Miles*, 39 Conn. 485. Or any other business noxious or dangerous to the public or any portion thereof. *Taylor v. State*, 35 Wis. 298.

³ In Louisiana it has been held competent to prohibit private markets within a certain distance of the public market. *New Orleans v. Stafford*, 27 La. Ann. 417.

⁴ *Nightingale's Case*, 11 Pick. 168; *Buffalo v. Webster*, 10 Wend. 99; *Bush v. Seabury*, 8 Johns. 418; *Ash v. People*, 11 Mich. 347; *State v. Leiber*, 11 Iowa, 407; *Le Claire v. Davenport*, 13 Iowa, 210; *White v. Kent*, 11 Ohio, n. s. 550; *Green v. Carson*, 10 Bush, 64. The power is continuing, and markets once established may be changed at the option of the authorities, and they

cannot even by contract deprive themselves of this power. *Gale v. Kalamazoo*, 23 Mich. 344; *Gall v. Cincinnati*, 18 Ohio, n. s. 563; *Cougot v. New Orleans*, 16 La. Ann. 21. A constitutional provision forbidding the General Assembly granting "to any citizen, or class of citizens, privileges or immunities which upon the same terms shall not equally belong to all citizens," does not preclude the licensing of the sale of intoxicating drinks by males only. *Blair v. Kilpatrick*, 40 Ind. 315.

⁵ *Guillotte v. New Orleans*, 12 La. Ann. 432; *Page v. Fazackerly*, 36 Barb. 392; *Raleigh v. Sorrell*, 1 Jones, L. 49; *Gaines v. Coates*, 51 Miss. 335; *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* §§ 323, 324, and cases cited.

⁶ *Commonwealth v. Stodder*, 2 Cush. 562; *Morrill v. State*, 38 Wis. 428; s. c. 20 Am. Rep. 12; *Dillon, Mun. Corp.* §§ 291-296. As to license fees, and when they are taxes, see *ante*, pp. *201, *495; *Mayor, &c. of Mobile v. Yuille*, 3 Ala. 139. The sale of pure milk and pure water mixed may be made a penal offence. *Commonwealth v. Waite*, 11 Allen, 264. As to market regulations in

determine * the voter's intention. Perfect certainty, how- [* 607] ever, is not required in these cases. It is sufficient if an examination leaves no reasonable doubt upon the intention, and technical accuracy is never required in any case. The cardinal rule is to give effect to the intention of the voter, whenever it is not left in uncertainty ;¹ but if an ambiguity appears upon its face, the elector cannot be received as a witness to make it good by testifying for whom or for what office he intended to vote.²

The ballot in no case should contain more names than are authorized to be voted for, for any particular office at that election ; and, if it should, it must be rejected for the obvious impossibility of the canvassing officers choosing from among the names on the ballot, and applying the ballot to some to the exclusion of others. The choice must be made by the elector himself, and be expressed by the ballot. Accordingly, where only one supervisor was to be chosen, and a ballot was deposited having upon it the names of two persons for that office, it was held that it must be rejected for ambiguity.³ It has been decided, however, that if a voter shall write a name upon a printed ballot, in connection with the title to an office, this is such a designation of the name written for that office as sufficiently to demonstrate his intention, even though he omit to strike off the printed name of the opposing candidate. The writing in such a case, it is held, ought to prevail as the highest evidence of the voter's intention, and the failure to strike off the printed name will be regarded as an accidental oversight.⁴

¹ *People v. Matteson*, 17 Ill. 169; *People v. Cook*, 8 N. Y. 67; *State v. Elwood*, 12 Wis. 551; *People v. Bates*, 11 Mich. 362.

² *People v. Seaman*, 5 Denio, 409. The mental purpose of an elector is not provable; it must be determined by his acts. *People v. Saxton*, 22 N. Y. 309; *Beardstown v. Virginia*, 76 Ill. 34. And where the intent is to be gathered from the ballot, it is a question of law, and cannot be submitted to the jury as one of fact. *People v. McManus*, 34 Barb. 620.

³ *People v. Seaman*, 5 Denio, 409. See also *Attorney-General v. Ely*, 4 Wis. 420; *People v. Loomis*, 8

Wend. 396; *People v. Cook*, 14 Barb. 259, and 8 N. Y. 67; *State v. Griffey*, 5 Neb. 161. Such a vote, however, could not be rejected as to candidates for other offices regularly named upon the ballot; it would be void only as to the particular office for which the duplicate ballot was cast. *Attorney-General v. Ely*, 4 Wis. 420. If the name of a candidate for an office is given more than once, it is proper to count it as one ballot, instead of rejecting it as illegally thrown. *People v. Holden*, 28 Cal. 123; *State v. Pierce*, 35 Wis. 93.

⁴ *People v. Saxton*, 22 N. Y. 309. This ruling suggests this query :

upon the ballot is altogether different from that of a candidate, and not the same in sound and not a mere abbreviation, the evidence of the voter cannot be received to show for whom it was intended.¹

Upon the question how far extrinsic evidence is admissible by way of helping out any imperfections in the ballot, no rule can be

county returns, the intention of the voters, and the identity of the candidate with the name on the defective ballots. Their judicial power extends no further than to take notice of such facts of public notoriety as that certain well known abbreviations are generally used to designate particular names, and the like." So far as this case holds, that the canvassers are not chargeable with error in not counting the ballots with the name Benjamin Welch for Benjamin Welch, Jr., it is, doubtless, correct. But suppose the canvassers had seen fit to do so, could the court hold they were guilty of usurpation in thus counting and allowing them? Could not the canvassers take notice of such facts of general public notoriety as everybody else would take notice of? Or must they shut their eyes to facts which all other persons must see? The facts are these: Benjamin Welch, Jr., and James M. Cook are the candidates, and the only candidates, for State Treasurer. These facts are notorious, and the two political parties make determined efforts to elect one or the other. Certain votes are cast for Benjamin Welch, with the descriptive word "junior" omitted. The name is correct, but, as thus given, it *may* apply to some one else; but it would be to a person notoriously not a candidate. Under these circumstances, when the facts of which it would be necessary to take notice have occurred under their own supervision, and are universally known, so that the result of a contest in the courts could not be doubtful, is there ~~any~~ reason why the canvassers should

not take notice of these facts, count the votes which a jury would subsequently be compelled to count, and thus save the delay, expense, vexation, and confusion of a contest? If their judicial power extends to a determination of what are common and well-known abbreviations, and what names spelled differently are *idem sonans*, why may it not also extend to the facts, of which there will commonly be quite as little doubt, as to who are the candidates at the election over which they preside? It seems to us, that, in every case where the name given on the ballot, though in some particulars imperfect, is not different from that of the candidate, and facts of general notoriety leave no doubt in the minds of canvassers that it was intended for him, the canvassers should be at liberty to do what a jury would afterwards be compelled to do, — count it for such candidate.

¹ A vote for "Pence" cannot be shown to have been intended for "Spence." *Hart v. Evans*, 8 Penn. St. 13. Where, however, wrong initials were given to the Christian name, the ballots were allowed to the candidate; the facts of public notoriety being such as to show that they were intended for him. *Attorney-General v. Ely*, 4 Wis. 420. This case goes farther in permitting mistakes in ballots to be corrected on parol evidence than any other in the books. Mr. M'Crary, in his *Law of Elections*, devotes his seventh chapter to a careful discussion of the general subject of imperfect ballots.

tory ; for that cannot be called an election or the expression of the popular sentiment where a part only of the electors have been allowed to be heard, and the others, without being guilty of fraud or negligence, have been excluded.¹

If the inspectors of elections refuse to receive the vote of an elector duly qualified, they may be liable both civilly and criminally for so doing : criminally, if they were actuated by improper and corrupt motives ; and civilly, it is held in some of the States, even though there may have been no malicious design in so doing ;² * but other cases hold that, where the inspec- [* 617] tors are vested by the law with the power to pass upon the qualifications of electors, they exercise judicial functions in so doing, and are entitled to the same protection as other judicial officers in the discharge of their duty, and cannot be made liable except upon proof of express malice.³ Where, however, by the law under which the election is held, the inspectors are to receive the voter's ballot, if he takes the oath that he possesses the constitutional qualifications, the oath is the conclusive evidence on which the inspectors are to act, and they are not at liberty to refuse to administer the oath, or to refuse the vote after the oath

¹ See *Fort Dodge v. District Township*, 17 Iowa, 85 ; *Barry v. Lauck*, 5 Cold. 588. In *People v. Salomon*, 46 Ill. 415, it was held that where an act of the legislature, before it shall become operative, is required to be submitted to the vote of the legal electors of the district to be affected thereby, if the election which is attempted to be held is illegal within certain precincts containing a majority of the voters of the district, then the act will not be deemed to have been submitted to the required vote, and the result will not be declared upon the votes legally cast, adverse to what it would have been had no illegality intervened.

² *Kilham v. Ward*, 2 Mass. 236 ; *Gardner v. Ward*, 2 Mass. 244, note ; *Lincoln v. Hapgood*, 11 Mass. 350 ; *Capen v. Foster*, 12 Pick. 485 ; *Gates v. Neal*, 23 Pick. 308 ; *Blanchard v. Stearns*, 5 Met. 298 ; *Jeffries v. Ankeny*, 11 Ohio, 372 ; *Chrisman v.*

Bruce, 1 Duvall, 63 ; *Monroe v. Collins*, 17 Ohio, N. S. 665 ; *Gillespie v. Palmer*, 20 Wis. 544.

³ *Jenkins v. Waldron*, 11 Johns. 114 ; *Wecherley v. Guyer*, 11 S. & R. 35 ; *Gordon v. Farrar*, 2 Dougl. (Mich.) 411 ; *Peavey v. Robbins*, 3 Johns. L. 339 ; *Caulfield v. Bullock*, 18 B. Mon. 494 ; *Miller v. Rucker*, 1 Bush, 135 ; *Chrisman v. Bruce*, 1 Duv. 63 ; *Wheeler v. Patterson*, 1 N. H. 88 ; *Turnpike v. Champney*, 2 N. H. 199 ; *Rail v. Potts*, 8 Humph. 225 ; *Bevard v. Hoffman*, 18 Md. 479 ; *Elbin v. Wilson*, 33 Md. 135 ; *Friend v. Hamill*, 34 Md. 298 ; *Pike v. Megoun*, 44 Mo. 492 ; see *State v. Daniels*, 44 N. H. 383, and *Goetcheus v. Mathewson*, 61 N. Y. 420. In the last case the whole subject is fully and carefully examined, and the authorities analyzed. Compare *Byler v. Asher*, 47 Ill. 101 ; *Elbin v. Wilson*, 33 Md. 135.

doctrine is here stated ; but in one important case it was denied that it could apply to the office of chief executive of the State. The case was one in which the incumbent was a candidate for re-election, and a majority of votes was cast for his opponent. Certain spurious returns were, however, transmitted to the State canvassers, which, together with the legal returns, showed a plurality for the incumbent, and he was accordingly declared chosen. Proceedings being taken against him by *quo warranto* in the Supreme Court, he objected to the jurisdiction, on the ground that the three departments of the State government, the legislative, the executive, and the judicial, were equal, co-ordinate, and independent of each other, and that each department must be and is the ultimate judge of the election and qualification of its own member or members, subject only to impeachment and appeal to the people ; that the question, who is rightfully entitled to the office of governor, could in no case become a judicial question ; and that as the Constitution provides no means for ousting a successful usurper of either of the three departments of the government, that power rests exclusively with the people, to be exercised by them whenever they think the exigency requires it.¹ There is a basis of truth in this argument: the executive of the State cannot be subordinated to the judiciary, and may, in general, refuse obedience to writs by which this may be attempted.² But when the question is, who is the executive of the State, the judges have functions to perform, which are at least as important as those of any other citizens, and the fact that they are judges can never be a reason why they should submit to a usurpation. A successful usurpation of the executive office can only be accomplished with the acquiescence of the other departments ; and the judges, for the determination of their own course, must, in some form, inquire into or take notice of the facts. In a controversy of such momentous import, the most formal and deliberate inquiry that the circumstances will admit of is alone excusable ; and, when made and declared, the circumstances must be extraor-

seems to be made a question. That it is, see *State v. Burnett*, 2 Ala. 140 ; *People v. Cicotte*, 16 Mich. 283, *dictum*, *People v. Albany, &c. R. R. Co.*, 57 N. Y. 161. That it is not, is held in *Ewing v. Filly*, 43 Penn. St. 384 ; *Commonwealth v. Leech*, 44 Penn.

St. 332 ; *State v. Johnson*, 26 Ark. 281. It is, however, conceded in Pennsylvania that, in a proceeding to forfeit an office, jury trial is of right.

¹ *Attorney-General v. Barstow*, 4 Wis. 567.

² See *ante*, p. *116.

any question to be raised upon this subject. For the evidence voluntarily given upon any such question will usually come from those least worthy of credit, who, if they have voted without legal right in order to elect particular candidates, will be equally ready to testify * falsely, if their testimony can [* 627] be made to help the same candidates ; especially when, if they give evidence that they voted the opposing ticket, there can usually be no means, as they will well know, of showing the evidence to be untrue.¹ Moreover, to allow such scrutiny is to hold out strong temptation to usurpation of office, without pretence or color of right ; since the nature of the case, and the forms and proceedings necessary to a trial are such that, if an issue may be made on the right of every individual voter, it will be easy, in the case of important elections, to prolong a contest for the major part if not the whole of an official term, and to keep perpetually before the courts the same excitements, strifes, and animosities which characterize the hustings, and which ought, for the peace of the community, and the safety and stability of our institutions, to terminate with the close of the polls.²

Upon this subject there is very little judicial authority, though legislative bodies, deriving their precedents from England, where the system of open voting prevails, have always been accustomed to receive such evidence, and have indeed allowed a latitude of inquiry which makes more to depend upon the conscience of the witnesses, and of legislative committees, in some cases, than upon the legitimate action of the voters. The question of the right to inquire into the qualifications of those who had voted at an election, on a proceeding in the nature of a *quo warranto*, was directly presented in one case to the Supreme Court of New York, and the court was equally divided upon it.³ On error to the Court of Appeals, a decision in favor of the right was rendered with

¹ It has been decided in Wisconsin that where an unqualified person is called to prove that he voted at an election, and declines to testify, the fact of his having voted may be proved, and then his declarations may be put in evidence to show how he voted. *State v. Olin*, 23 Wis. 319. This may give the incompetent voter a double vote. First, he votes for the ticket of his choice, and then, on

a contest, he declares he voted the other way, and a deduction is made from the opposite vote accordingly. See *Beardstown v. Virginia*, 76 Ill. 34.

² This is one reason, perhaps, why in the case of State officers a statutory tribunal is sometimes provided with powers of summary and final decision.

³ *People v. Pease*, 30 Barb. 588.

been attained under a rule which should exclude all such inquiries. Still, I cannot avoid the conclusion that in theory and spirit our constitution and our statutes recognize as valid those votes only which are given by electors who possess the constitutional qualifications; that they recognize as valid such elections only as are affected by the votes of a majority of such qualified electors; and though the election boards of inspectors and canvassers, acting only ministerially, are bound in their decisions by the number of votes deposited in accordance with the forms of law regulating their action, it is quite evident that illegal votes may have been admitted by the perjury or other fault of the voters, and that the majority to which the inspectors have been constrained to certify and the canvassers to allow has been thus wrongfully and illegally secured; and I have not been able to satisfy myself that, in such a case, these boards, acting thus ministerially, and often compelled to admit votes which they know to be illegal, were intended to constitute tribunals of last resort for the determination of the rights of parties claiming an election. If this were so, and there were no legal redress, I think there would be much reason to apprehend that elections would degenerate into mere contests of fraud.

“The person having the greatest number of the votes of legally qualified electors, it seems to me, has a constitutional right to the office; and if no inquiry can be had into the qualification of any voter, here is a constitutional right depending upon a mode of trial unknown to the constitution, and, as I am strongly inclined to think, opposed to its provisions. I doubt the competency of the legislature, should they attempt it, which I think they have not, to make the decision of inspectors or canvassers final under our constitution.”

The opposite view is expressed

by Justice *Campbell* as follows (*ib.* p. 294):—

“The first inquiry is whether an election can be defeated as to any candidate by showing him to have received illegal votes. The authorities upon election questions are, in this country, neither numerous nor satisfactory. In England, where votes are given *viva voce*, it is always easy to determine how any voter has given his voice. And in some States of the Union, a system seems to prevail of numbering each ballot as given, and also numbering the voter's name on the poll list, so as to furnish means of verification when necessary. It has always been held, and is not disputed, that illegal votes do not avoid an election, unless it can be shown that their reception affects the result. And where the illegality consists in the casting of votes by persons unqualified, unless it is shown for whom they voted, it cannot be allowed to change the result.

“The question of the power of courts to inquire into the action of the authorities in receiving or rejecting votes is, therefore, very closely connected with the power of inquiring what persons were voted for by those whose qualifications are denied. It is argued for the relator that neither of these inquiries can be made. No use can fairly be made in such a controversy as the present of decisions or practice arising out of any system of open voting. The ballot system was designed to prevent such publicity, and not to encourage it. And the course adopted by legislative bodies cannot be regarded as a safe guide for courts of justice. There is little uniformity in it, and much of it is based on English precedents belonging to a different practice. The view taken of contested elections by these popular bodies is not always accurate, or consistent with any settled principles.

“There is no case so far as I have

ing every voter's action, there can be no safety against those personal or political influences which destroy individual freedom of choice.

"It is altogether idle to expect that there can be any such protection where the voter is only allowed to withhold his own oath concerning the ticket he has voted, while any other prying meddler can be permitted in a court of justice to guess under oath at its contents. If the law could permit an inquiry at all, there is no reason whatever for preventing an inquiry from the voter himself, who alone can actually know how he voted, and who can suffer no more by being compelled to answer than by having the fact established otherwise. The reason why the ballot is made obligatory by our constitution is to secure every one the right of preventing any one else from knowing how he voted, and there is no propriety in any rule which renders such a safeguard valueless.

"It has always been the case that the rules of evidence have, on grounds of public policy, excluded proof tending to explain how individuals have acted in positions where secrecy was designed for their protection or that of the public. No grand juror could be permitted to disclose as a witness the ballots given by himself or others upon investigations of crime. Informers cannot be compelled to disclose to whom they have given their information. And many official facts are denied publicity. In all of these cases, the rule is not confined to one person any more than to another; for public policy is against publication from any source. And if, as is clear, a man is entitled to keep his own vote secret, it is difficult to see how any testimony whatever can be allowed, from any source, to identify and explain it.

"The statutes contain some provisions bearing upon these topics with considerable force. By sec. 47 of the

Compiled Laws, every voter is compelled to deliver his ballot folded; and, by sec. 52, the inspector is prohibited from either opening or permitting it to be opened.

"The devices adopted for creating different appearances in the ballots of different parties are such palpable evasions of the spirit of the law as to go very far towards destroying the immunity of the voter, and in some States it has been found desirable to attempt by statute the prevention of such tricks; but the difficulty of doing this effectually is exemplified in *People v. Kilduff*, 15 Ill. 492, where the evidence seems to have shown that a uniform variation may be entirely accidental. Unless some such difference exists, it would be idle to attempt any proof how a person voted, and it would be better to do away at once with the whole ballot than to have legal tribunals give any aid or countenance to indirect violations of its security; and the evidence received in the present case exemplifies the impropriety of such investigations. In some instances, at least, the only proof that a voter, complained of as illegal, cast his ballot for one or the other of these candidates, was, that he voted a ticket externally appearing to belong to one of the two political parties, and containing names of both State and county officers. To allow such proof to be received in favor of or against any particular candidate on the ticket, is to allow very remote circumstances indeed to assume the name of evidence. And the necessity of resorting to such out-of-the-way proofs only puts in a clearer light the impropriety and illegality of entering upon any such inquiry, when the law sedulously destroys the only real proofs, and will not tolerate a resort to them. And the whole State is much more interested than any single citizen can be, in emancipating elections from all those sinister influences, which have so

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REDUCING LEGISLATION.

THE constitutional amendment providing for biennial Legislatures in this State has attracted little attention, because there does not appear to be much difference of opinion with regard to it. The press is in favor of it, and if there is any deep or widespread hostility to it in the Legislature, there have been no indications as yet of such a feeling. This fact is of itself of considerable interest. The approval by so important a State as New York of an amendment cutting down the period of active legislation by one-half would furnish a striking indication of the direction which modern constitutional reform is taking.

A glance at the Constitution of any State as it stands to-day, will show that the most important changes introduced into it within the past forty years have been for the purpose of cutting down the powers of the Legislature. Most of them are, as the subjects to which they relate show, intended to guard against the invasion of fundamental popular rights by the arbitrary or corrupt use of legislative power, to prevent inequality, or the granting of special privileges. In this State, for instance, the Legislature is forbidden to change anybody's name, to lay out a road, to incorporate a village, to change the place of trial for a lawsuit, to increase or decrease any officer's salary during his term of office, to charter a railroad, or to grant any corporation any exclusive franchise or privilege whatever. It may pass laws on these subjects, to be sure, but they must be general laws, establishing universal rules, and not granting special privileges.

Nor can the Legislature audit or allow any private claim or account against the State, nor grant any extra compensation to any officer or employee of the State; nor can it loan or pledge the credit of the State to any individual, association, or corporation; nor can it in general contract any debt on behalf of the State, unless the law which provides for it imposes at the same time a direct annual tax sufficient to pay the debt in full in eighteen years; nor without a direct submission of the law after its passage to the people at a general election.

The constitutions of many other States contain similar provisions, as well as others relating to the passage of bills, and the formalities to be observed in their passage to guard against any legislative fraud, which are all inspired by the same distrust of the once wide authority exercised by the Legislature.

Such constitutional amendments show very clearly that the Legislature is looked upon in

modern times with much the same jealousy that the Executive once was. When most of our Constitutions were drawn up, it was the Crown, or that branch of the Government which corresponded to the Crown in this country, that was dreaded. It was the Executive that showed a tendency to exercise its powers unfairly, corruptly, and tyrannously, while the Legislature was generally looked upon as the ally and representative of the people in its struggle against the executive. From the time, indeed, of Magna Charta down to the opening of what may be called the modern constitutional period, in the middle of which we now are, the efforts of constitutional reformers have always been to limit the rights of the Executive—to prevent it from oppressing the subject or citizen. Beginning with the denial of the once-established right of the Crown to “sell justice,” or, in other words, to sell the writs through which redress in court was obtained, all prerogative was gradually taken away, until the English King had, in the modern American Constitution, been transformed into the American Governor, shorn of every vestige of authority which could make the office an instrument of oppression or wrong. But the very body through which most of these reforms had been accomplished, which had insisted on popular rights against the Executive, was in its turn to afford a refuge in a new form for the tyranny and corruption and favoritism and injustice which it had helped to destroy, and when this had been made plain, a new popular movement was required to throw around the Legislature restrictions analogous to those which were first found necessary in the case of the Crown. The effect that this modern constitutional movement has had in the reduction of legislation may be best seen by a comparison of the two annual bulky volumes of acts which were turned out at Albany only a few years ago with the thin octavo which now contains all that the Legislature finds it necessary to do every year. That the reduction in the subjects of legislation may be supplemented with advantage by a reduction of the time given to legislation, and the substitution of biennial for annual meetings, as has been already done in several other States, does not seem to be disputed even in the body most interested in preserving the present system—the Legislature itself.

For Apr. 27. 1852

